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All hail the new king of bigscreen video p50

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# HOME CINEMA

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3D TVs unveiled, p22

# WELCOME

The recession is over! Or, at least, it seems to be for the major kit manufacturers, whose lineups for 2010 crackle with innovation and promise.



Having recently visited this year's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, and R&D departments in Japan and South Korea, the HCC team has been so wowed by the next generation of AV hardware that we're running around like kids on a sugar rush. **3D TVs and Blu-ray decks, OLED and Toshiba's Cell TV are finally on the brink of release** and you can read about them, and much more, in our Global Tech Preview starting on p22.

In addition, in the here and now, we bring you the essential kit that's already available. JVC's DLA-HD950 (p50) could well be the best projector on the planet for the price, Philips' new 46in LED TV (p54) leads the way for the format, and Bowers & Wilkins' CM Series 5.1 speaker package (p58) is just the ticket for those with four-and-a-half grand burning a hole in their pocket.

This is already turning out to be a great year!

*Rik Henderson*

## TEAM HCC

**Rik Henderson:**  
Dep Ed Rik has worked on tech mags and videogames TV shows for two decades



**Anton van Beek:**  
News Ed Anton began his pro-videophile career over 11 years ago



**Mark Craven:**  
HCC's Production Editor can write shorthand – he can't read it, though



**Steve May:**  
HCC's Editor-in-Chief has a stunning 20+ years as a CE journo on his clock



**Chris Jenkins:**  
Our ISF-calibrated Tech Labs Manager is the former Editor of *Total DVD* mag



**John Rook:**  
Art Editor John first worked on HCC back in 1999, when TVs were made of wood





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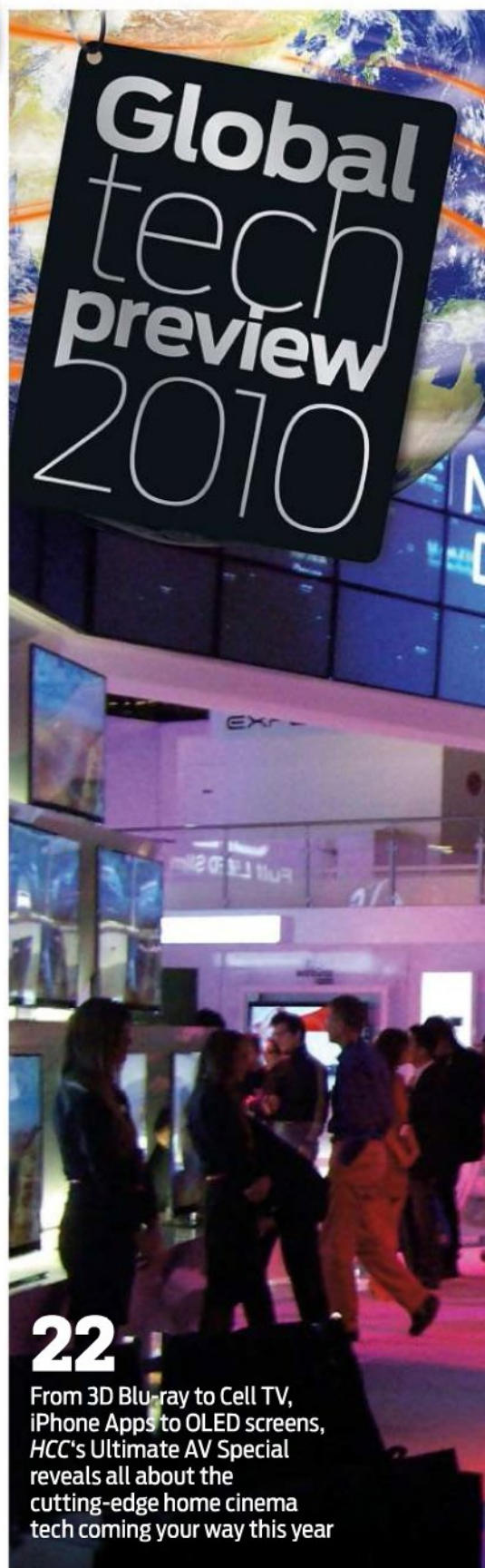
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Three £1,000 Full HD projectors are put through their paces in the HCC Tech Labs

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## TECH LABS

### Our guarantee to you:

Equipment reviewed in Home Cinema Choice is measured and quantified by Future Tech Labs, which for more than 15 years has set the standard for independent AV test & measurement. The findings of the Tech Labs are used to underpin the subjective opinions of our Reviews team, ensuring that you receive the best-possible advice when it comes to planning your next purchase



## CO-STARRING

This issue's team of expert writers are the best qualified in the business

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Technology specialist  
Martin co-developed HCC's  
Tech Lab operation



### Richard Stevenson:

Industry veteran and former  
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journal ERT



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The UK's foremost expert in  
extreme audio writes about  
bass, hi-fi and cartoons



### Jim Hill:

Apple fanatic Hill is the  
former editor of T3 Home  
and a What Hi-Fi escapee



### Barry Fox:

A veteran commentator on  
consumer electronics in  
mags like New Scientist



### Danny Philips:

Former Editor of What Video  
& High-Definition TV and  
dedicated AV boffin





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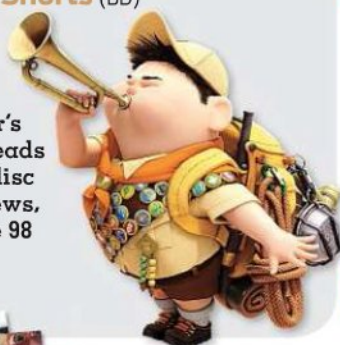
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We reveal everything you need to know about 3D!



# Looking for the best Home Cinema?

There is only one place in the UK you can find it.



## Hear Your Films as the Director Intended

At Gecko, our house system is M&K's legendary 150 speakers, as used by Warner Bros, 20th Century Fox, Paramount, Universal, Dolby, Lucasfilm, THX, DTS, DreamWorks, Sony Pictures and Disney. Using these same speakers in your home will perfectly reproduce what the director intended and at a fraction of the price of other alternatives.

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# BULLETIN

→ **News highlights** FREEVIEW HD Set-top boxes and TVs finally ready to ship  
DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER Bowers & Wilkins adds bling to its speakers WILL 3D MAKE YOU ILL?  
Scientists debate 'physiological effects' of next-gen TV PARANORMAL ACTIVITY HD release for the  
scariest film of the Noughties PICK 'N' MIX Director Nick Love reveals his five favourite films

## Remote 2.0

Samsung Touch Remote → [www.samsung.co.uk](http://www.samsung.co.uk)

Is it a phone? Is it an MP3 player? Nope, it's a TV remote control. Debuted at the Consumer Electronics Show, this hi-tech zapper will be bundled with Samsung's new high-end LE9000 LED TV. The full-colour touchscreen remote's standout feature is its ability to stream TV content wirelessly, so your missus can still watch the end of *Emmerdale* while you begin the latest Blu-ray blockbuster or flick over to the footy.



### HCC Online...

Looking for breaking AV news, blogs, features, & reviews? For your daily fix visit us at [www.homecinemachoice.com](http://www.homecinemachoice.com) Follow us on Twitter @hccmag



# Diamonds are forever

Bowers & Wilkins 800 Series Diamond → [www.bowers-wilkins.co.uk](http://www.bowers-wilkins.co.uk)

If you want speakers with a bit of bling, look no further than Bowers & Wilkins' latest high-end offering. Building on five previous generations of its revered 800 Series speakers, B&W's 800 Series Diamond range ups the performance bar yet again by including diamond dome tweeters. The seven-strong lineup includes four floorstanders, a bookshelf design and two centre channel iterations. Prices range from £3,000-£14,000 per pair.



## Partner with...

**NAD Masters Series M56**  
High-end hi-def disc-spinner  
£1,900 approx



Arriving in the UK courtesy of distributor Armour Home Electronics, NAD's new flagship Blu-ray player packs quite a punch. Described as being 'built for performance', the M56 ticks all of the necessary boxes with Super Fast Loading, onboard HD audio decoding, 7.1-channel analogue outputs, premium build quality (including extensive shielding) and a USB 2.0 port for music and image file playback.  
[www.armourhome.co.uk](http://www.armourhome.co.uk)



## Art Loewe



Loewe has added a 32in model to its Art SL range of Full HD LCD TVs. Made by Phoenix Design of

Stuttgart, the eye-catching Art SL is one of the slimmest TVs Loewe has ever produced, but still finds space for a DVB-T tuner, 100Hz tech and 24p motion picture display, with the additional option of a 250GB DR+ hard disk recorder. Loewe has also introduced a High Gloss White finish for the 32-, 37- and 42in models in the Art SL range. Prices begin at £2,040.

## Apex arrives



Monitor Audio is targeting the 'luxury interior market' with its flagship range of Apex speakers

touching down in the UK this March. Promising elite styling coupled with the technology of the company's Platinum, GS and RX hi-fidelity speakers, the Apex range arrives with three models – the ultra compact A10 satellite (£250 each), the slim-profile A40 centre (£400) and the 500W AW-12 active subwoofer (£900). Pre-wired speaker stands are an option for the A10, too.

## Meridian takes control



Retailing for £3,500 and available soon, Meridian's G61R is the

high-end brand's most affordable audio processor/pre-amplifier yet. Central to the G61R is a powerful DSP engine running at 150MHz and delivering 900MIPS (million instructions per second), ensuring all processing is carried out with '48bit precision'. The DSP is also responsible for the unit's comprehensive bass management system and room correction software.

# Freeview HD coming soon

Chip required by set-top-boxes finally enters mass production

Freeview HD's debut in early December last year was not the big fanfare that many had been expecting, with just a technical briefing for AV hacks on the day transmissions began from Crystal Palace in London and Winter Hill in Manchester. And with the service now two months old, we're still awaiting hardware.

**The good news is, the wait should soon be over.**

The hold up was caused by a delay in getting the chipsets ready for the TV platform's launch. Sony, however, announced early January that it has begun largescale manufacturing of its DVB-T2 demodulator LSI (pictured below), which means Freeview HD components can now be finalised and shipped to stores.

At the CES 2010 in Las Vegas, numerous brands, including Sony and LG, pledged Freeview HD-enabled flatscreens in their 2010 lineups. Sony says that 75 per cent of its new UK flatscreen range will use Freeview HD tuners; LG is aiming to have half its 2010 flatscreen stable Freeview HD-capable for the World Cup in June, including LED, LCD and plasma models.

Of course, what many UK consumers want is a Freeview HD STB they can plug into their existing HDTV, and it looks like technology stalwart Humax will be first to bring one to shops. With DVB-T2 chips now shipping, we expect Humax's HD-Fox T2 receiver to arrive soon with a sub-£200 price tag.

A twin tuner 500GB Freeview+ HD PVR will



**Freeview is still the UK's fastest-growing platform, says MD Ilse Howling**

follow later this year. Both models offer multimedia playback and network

streaming from PCs. Despite the delay in bringing equipment to consumers, Freeview MD Ilse Howling was in a bullish mood when she spoke to HCC: 'We're ensuring that the pace of change matches the expectations of our consumers.

That's why over 80 per cent of the analogue switchers this year have chosen Freeview and why Freeview is still the UK's fastest growing TV platform'.

And, with BBC iPlayer expected to be added to Freeview HD boxes this year, the Freeview MD hinted that receivers are in the works that will support VoD, offering Project Canvas, a joint venture between the BBC, ITV, Five and BT.

'Freeview is now on the main set in 10 million homes in the country,'

she added. 'I believe we're in a better position than almost anyone else in the market to launch new products like HD. We're helping to shift the entire country into a digital, on-demand entertainment environment.'

Around half the UK should have access to Freeview HD in time for the World Cup.



**Freeview HD**



## Playlist...

Team HCC reveals its Playback picks of the last month

### 1 The Rise & Fall of WCW (R2 DVD)



Vintage footage and candid revelations make this doc a must-see DVD. *Steve May*

### 2 Cloudy with the Chance of Meatballs (All-region BD)



Laugh-out loud funny and beautifully animated – a brilliant BD release. *Rik Henderson*

### 3 Taking of Pelham 123 (All-region BD)



Another Tony Scott/Denzel Washington flick that delivers all the popcorn cinema thrills you need. *Mark Craven*

### 4 Wallander: Series Two (BBC One)

This gripping Swedish detective drama is the most cinematic show the BBC has ever made. *Anton van Beek*



### 5 Being Human: S2 (BBC Three)



Trendy vampires, werewolves and ghosts abound in this fabulous black comedy. *John Rook*



## Pick'n'mix

Film director Nick Love picks his five fave movies...



### 1 Heat

It's just f\*\*king epic, isn't it!

### 2 The Insider

I'm obviously a Michael Mann fan. What's so amazing about *The Insider* is it's such a change of direction from *Heat*.

### 3 Midnight Cowboy

Because of the relationship between Dustin Hoffman and Jon Voight. I love this film.

### 4 Apocalypse Now

Brilliant story-telling. The sound editing and the style of it, you've never seen anything like it. You feel it. An absolute labour of love.

### 5 Paper Moon

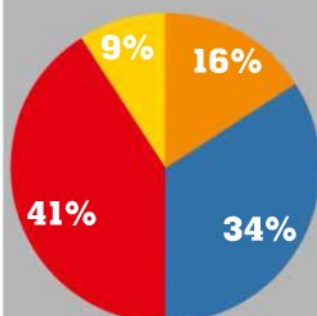
A rarely seen film by Peter Bogdanovic, with a beautiful relationship between Ryan O'Neal and Tatum O'Neal, father and daughter, of course.

Nick Love's *The Firm* is out now on DVD and Blu-ray care of Warner Home Video (reviewed on page 99). His next project is a bigscreen remake of *The Sweeney*.

## We asked...

How excited are you about watching 3D at home?

- Massively – I'll be first in line for a 3D player and TV
- Not sure – I'm going to need to see it in action first
- Not at all – 3D is nothing more than a gimmick
- I wouldn't know – 3D just doesn't work for me



Results from [www.homecinemachoice.com](http://www.homecinemachoice.com)  
Go online for more polling action

# 3D health impact unknown

Research into physiological effects done by 'one man and his dog'

3D is currently the hottest theatrical and home entertainment technology, with major AV manufacturers working towards delivering stereoscopic material to cinemas and the home. But in the rush to bring the next-gen tech to the consumer, possible health effects are being ignored, according to attendees at an exclusive 3DTV seminar at the UK Digital Television Group's London office.

While everyone in the industry seems to recognise that a significant number of viewers might suffer eye-strain and even nausea after watching 3D, no-one seems to be researching the causes and possible solutions. A research programme in California was described to HCC as consisting of 'one man and his dog' – not literally, we hope. Simon Gauntlett, the DTG's Technology Director, suggested that his organisation might be willing to take on this research role – if someone came up with the money.

A further note of caution was sounded by Simon Parnall of set-top box software developer NDS. His research suggests that 3D material shot with a particular screen size and viewing distance in mind might not work with different parameters; in extreme cases the focus point might 'shift beyond infinity'. This might sound like something out of *Toy Story*..., but it basically implies that 3D material might have to be rescaled to take into account different screen sizes, which doesn't sound very practical.

Sky's chief engineer, Chris Johns spoke about the solutions Sky has



**3D trials are currently limited by the lack of hardware, says Sky's Chris Johns**

found to shooting varied events such as sports, drama and documentary, but admitted that the first real public tests would

be when the system was made available to commercial premises. 'We've had production staff shut in outside-broadcast vans for hours with no problems, but the problem with running largescale trials has been availability of TVs,' he admitted. In any case, he agreed with Simon Gauntlett that the aim of 3DTV should be to deliver 'a realistic and immersive experience – not shocks and gimmicks.'

The last word belonged to Peter Symes of global standards body SMPTE (Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers), which has a 3D Home Master working group with sub-groups for areas such as image content, metadata, graphics overlays and electronic interfacing. 'One size is not going to fit all,' said Symes 'Physiological effects that are less significant in cinema will be more so in TV. It's not going to be easy, and there will be surprises on the way.'



NDS is already experimenting with a 3D graphic user interface

## Scary movie



The smash horror hit of 2009 is coming to scare you in your own homes this March. While we're unsure how well this latest lo-fi 'handycam' horror will hold up in HD, Icon Home Entertainment has revealed that it will be releasing *Paranormal Activity* on DVD and Blu-ray in the UK on March 22, priced £20 and £25 respectively. Extra features are limited to an alternate ending, plus the winning entries to a *Film Your Own Paranormal Activity* short contest, chosen by director Oren Peli.

## Monster mash



While the Megapod sounds like something that should be fighting Giant Octopus in a low-budget monster movie, it's actually the name for Danish brand Scandyna's crazy new floorstander. Available in a choice of six flashy colours for around £2,400 per pair, this eye-catching product takes the company's high-frequency/mid-range Minipod speaker and connects it to the Megapod bass unit (which uses a 10in long-throw driver) via a curved aluminium arm.

## In-wall quartet



MidBass Distribution Ltd is introducing a new in-wall speaker range, described as 'a flexible sound system with multiple setup options that will compliment any home cinema'. The new PICS speakers come in four iterations (going from a 5in driver/1in tweeter array to a 3x 5in driver/2x 1in tweeter model) and are hidden behind acoustically-transparent cloth printed with either artwork from the PICS range or customised with an image of your choosing. Pricing was unavailable when HCC went to press.



This month's top ten news stories in handy, bite-sized chunks...

### Deliveries are snow problem for Currys



## 1 Ice truckers

Currys went the extra mile in January to ensure that the 'big freeze' didn't stop deliveries in the worst-hit areas of the UK. The retailer recruited the services of an outdoor delivery specialist armed with unique quad bikes to carry out deliveries – the first of which was a 42in TV delivered to an address 50 miles north of its Aberdeen store.

## 2 We ♥ TV

Despite the worst recession in an age, our love of flatscreen TVs remains undiminished. Market researchers Meko surveyed TV markets across Europe, the Middle East and Africa during 2009 and discovered that demand was up 12 per cent year-on-year. The biggest surprise, though, was Philips managing to oust Sony from third place in terms of market share.

## 3 Sammy still UK fave

In related news, Samsung has claimed the top slot in the UK TV market for the third year running – the latest data shows that the brand now commands a whopping 23 per cent market share. 'To be market leader for three consecutive years is fantastic news, and reinforces the strength of Samsung's product range,' gushed Andy Griffiths, Vice President of Consumer Electronics for Samsung.

## 4 Big is best

Panasonic has shown off the world's largest (more than) Full HD 3D plasma screen. The 152in 4K2K (4,096 x 2,160) monster has been developed to demonstrate the brand's ultra high-speed 3D tech.

## 5 Mind over matter

Do you find using a remote control too taxing? Well, the boffins at Hitachi are working on an alternative that will save you from ever having to move your finger to press a button again. The company's revolutionary brain-interface allows users to control their TVs and other electronics by analysing changes in blood flow within the brain. Futurama!

## 6 3D Wars

A long time ago... George Lucas went on and on about re-jigging the original *Star Wars* trilogy in 3D for another cinema outing, but nothing ever came of it. It seems, though, that the success of *Avatar* has got him thinking again. 'We've been struggling with it, but I think [*Avatar*] will be a new impetus to make that happen,' says the bearded billionaire.

## 7 'Read all about it!'

LG Display has unveiled the world's largest e-paper. The A3-sized 19in bendable sheet uses electronic ink microcapsules embedded on a substrate of ultra thin, transparent metal foil to replicate the look and feel of traditional print. It's this use of lightweight foil, rather than a glass substrate, that gives the display its paper-like flexibility. The display is a mere 0.3mm thin and weighs just 130 grams.

## 8 iPlayer hits new high

BBC iPlayer broke 100 million downloads in a single month for the first time last December, according to stats released by Beeb. The most popular iPlayer show over the festive period was *Top Gear Bolivia Special*, with 1,088,700 streams.

## 9 The price is right

Is the price discrepancy between Blu-ray and DVD finally coming to an end? In an industry first, Icon Home Entertainment says it will peg its Blu-ray prices alongside DVD during 2010. Price parity will begin with Blu-ray and DVD releases out from April 1, and includes *The Road*, *Nowhere Boy* and *Precious*.

## 10 Transforming BD sales

The British Video Association has reported that Blu-ray disc sales increased 123 per cent year-on-year in 2009 to 8.4million units, with the biggest seller being *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*. BD also made up a higher proportion of new release disc purchases, accounting for 26 per cent of *District 9*'s sales, and 22 per cent of *Star Trek*'s.



T2: Britain's best selling BD last year

## Premiere

HCC's guide to what's happening in the world of TV and films...

### Back to School



Fans hoping for a fourth Sam Raimi/Tobey Maguire *Spider-Man* movie will be disappointed to learn that Sony is to 'reboot' the comix franchise. The aptly-named Marc Webb is directing what will be a more modestly-budgeted origin story with Peter Parker learning his web-slinging skills in high school once again.

### Mendes given licence

Oscar-winning director Sam Mendes (*American Beauty*) is apparently being lined up to helm the 23rd James Bond flick, which is meant to start shooting in June this year. Could this mean we'll see wife Kate Winslet as the next Bond girl?

### Sequel? Elementary

With Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* racing past the \$350m mark in box office receipts, it's not surprising that Warner Bros is raring to go with a sequel, almost definitely revolving around the Baker Street detective's arch nemesis Moriarty. A 2011 release isn't out of the question.

### Dead start walking

Several months after it was first revealed to be interested, US cable channel AMC (*Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad*, etc) has finally confirmed that it has greenlit a pilot based on Robert Kirkman's acclaimed zombie comic *The Walking Dead*. We can't wait!

### No-go cop



Darren Aronofsky's long-gestating *RoboCop* remake has been put on hold by MGM. Rumours are that it's not the impending sale of the studio that has put the kibosh on the project, but the fact that the studio wanted a 3D film, while Aronofsky didn't.

# News x10



世界初! 3D番組好評放送中! 新コンテンツ続々登場



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(独)農業・食品産業技術総合研究機構 農村工学研究所では、「農村3Dドームシアター」を使って農村景観が人の心理・生理にあたる反応を計測し、農村景観デザインを考案しています。BS11ではそのコンテンツの一部をご紹介します。



# The revolution

**Steve May** visits the world's first 3D satellite broadcaster for a taste of tomorrow's TV future – and no, it's not Sky...

BS11's daily 3D schedule (above) comprises animations and educational shorts

BS11's Hiroshi Endo says he expects advertisers to adopt 3D during 2010



Satellite broadcaster Sky has made no secret of its 3D ambitions. Using the Sky+HD platform, it will introduce a 3D service (details yet to be confirmed) some time during 2010. A few special events are likely to pre-empt a pay strand on one of its many channels. It goes without saying that this puts Sky at the forefront of broadcasting technology. But in Japan, a much smaller satcaster has already been paving the way with its own innovative 3D broadcasts.

BS11 is a relative minnow in the competitive seas of Japan's commercial broadcasting. Yet for a number of years it's been setting the global pace when it comes to over-the-air 3D. HCC paid a visit to its HQ in Tokyo for a look at its plucky operation and a taste of 3D things to come.

BS11 first began broadcasting back in December 2007, and – amazingly – 3D was part of the schedule even at that early point. The station has a reputation for being tech-friendly, and is part-funded by some big names in consumer electronics. The largest shareholder in the company is Bic Camera, a giant electronics retail chain in Japan. It's from here that viewers can track down the Hyundai 3D screens required for the service. The channel itself is free-to-air, with no subscription required.

A look through the station's programme guide is predictably eclectic. In amongst the anime shows (.hack//SIGN and Hime being two

examples) and Ultraman reruns are classic samurai movies, *American Idol* (!) and local sitcoms. Sandwiched amongst these are the 3D segments that have brought HCC to town. These are broadcast daily in five-minute chunks made up of a mix of computer animation and short films, including a paraglider ride over the Japanese countryside. The latter is provided to BS11 by the government as part of an agricultural promotion ('mutual PR' I was told). Coming soon is Golf Yoga (!) and a guide to Hawaiian hula.

Hiroshi Endo is the general manager of the engineering department in BS11's programming division. It's his job to oversee the 3D transmissions, leading a team of 20 engineers in total. When I visited, the satcaster was considering the formation of a 3D-specific group.

Given that the entire company only numbers 50, the proportion turned over to the technical side is considerable. Endo tells me: 'When more people begin watching 3D next year, we plan on increasing our coverage, as well as offering advertisers the ability to produce 3D commercials. We have the know-how to develop that side of the market.'

As with Sky's proposal, BS11 uses an HD platform to deliver side-by-side/half resolution 3D images. **The end result is a convincing 3D illusion when viewed with active shutter glasses.**

The paraglider ride conveys a good sense of depth, even if the resolution is lacking when compared to a hi-def 2D broadcast.



# starts here



Endo explains that his R&D team are currently looking at using upscaling technology to address the shortfall in image resolution. 'That will make our broadcasts a better match for 3D from 1080p sources,' he reveals. 'We think we can increase the detail.' When not broadcasting 3D, BS11 offers viewers a mix of HD and SD content.

Despite transmitting 3D segments for several years, there's still the sense that the operation is experimental ('3D is a brand-new market – nobody knows the correct way to do things just yet'). And the number of viewers is undeniably low. As a free-to-air station, BS11 isn't exactly sure how many viewers it has tuning in to its 3D transmissions, but admits the current lack of 3D-compatible screens is restricting its reach.

'Hyundai is only manufacturing around 200 3D TVs a month,' reveals Endo. 'These come in 32 and 46in sizes, but availability is poor.'

## Your own private 3D world

An alternate route to 3D is via personal 3D-viewing glasses. These are currently made and sold by Vuzix. The company has a range of video glasses, some for consumer use (wearing them, the viewer has the equivalent of a 50in screen suspended in front of him) and some for pro/military use. 3D is supported by a number of glasses in the company's range, including the iWear AV920, which creates a display roughly equivalent to watching a 62in 3D display from a distance of nine feet. Keiichi Fujii, from Vuzix Japan, told me that while the 3D-compatible glasses are popular, more programming and

improvements in image quality are required to really drive the market.

The quality issue should be resolved by new software, he says. 'The mobile TV market in Japan, called One-seg TV, was originally transmitted at 15fps, with the result that images stuttered. But upscaling software now found in higher-end phone brands like Sony and Panasonic increases this to 30fps, giving a much smoother image. Similar developments will aid 3D TV. The human eye is very sensitive to vertical resolution, and it's this that can be improved.'

According to Endo, being an early pioneer in 3D TV came at a high price. 'When BS11 began, hardware was in short supply and very expensive, but things are changing now. We believe that there will be an explosion in 3D technology and editing software during 2010 and prices will really come down. Soon anyone will be able to make a 3D movie.' He adds: 'We've found that it takes around two to three years to train operatives how to shoot in 3D. The interesting thing is that 2D professionals tend to come to 3D with preconceptions about programme making. We actually find it easier to educate new people. No experience is actually better when it comes to 3D programme making.'

Ultimately, the 3D revolution is a question of 'when' rather than 'if'. It's all about exposure, says the man from BS11: 'The World Cup and the next Olympics will prove very important for 3D. These will be the main opportunity for the public to experience 3D TV. When that happens there's no turning back' ●

3D at BS11: As with Sky's upcoming 3D service, BS11 uses its hi-def platform to deliver a side-by-side half-resolution system (pictured top) that gives 540i resolution to each eye. The active shutter glasses (as worn by BS11's engineering chief Hiroshi Endo, above) are reasonably comfortable to wear and the sense of depth is good, although image quality is very dependent on the source. When HCC visited last December, BS11 was running a festive programme schedule – which explains the Christmas tree...





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# POINT OF VIEW

Reviewer-philosopher **Richard Stevenson** starts the new year by unclogging the chi from behind those superfluous subwoofers

**W**e all need a spring clean at times. Life, work, the spare room, the shed and the home cinema system should be subject to a rigorous strip-down and clear-out every year or so. One should strive to lighten oneself from the burden of excess, preferably getting at those pesky cobwebs behind the TV at the same time. Having championed home cinema minimalism back in the Summer (stripping features from Blu-rays to focus on picture and sound quality) I am applying this 'less-is-more' philosophy to my 2010 home cinema system.

So over Christmas I gave the cinema room a spring clean that Mary Poppins would approve of. Two years of accumulated hardware, new lighting, new blinds, nomadic acoustic panelling and a Technicolor spiderweb of cable had left the place looking like the morning after Glastonbury. The system itself had got a little out of hand too; 11 speakers, eight subwoofers, two processors, eight power amps, TV, projector, six disc players and enough spare cable to fund a low-budget Brit-flick in scrap copper alone.

First out the door and onto eBay was one of the processors, a Tag McLaren AV32R-DP. I hadn't used it since I foolishly agreed to review Denon's AVP-A1HD. Foolishly, because as soon as I tried it, I knew I had to have one. Expensive review that.

Next to go – subwoofers. **Having a large sub linked to all seven main speakers was probably a tad excessive**, even if it does get nearer to Dolby's perfect model of full-range 20Hz-20kHz speakers all round. (It was THX that latterly decided an 80Hz crossover from main to sub). Eight subs is also an utter nightmare to balance and rebalance. The sub-cleanse left just a single Velodyne DD18 in charge of LFE.

Disc players had been quietly massing ranks too. A CD player, DVD/DVD-A player, SACD player, PS3 and two Blu-ray players. I kept my much loved Sony SCD1, but the rest have been ousted by

Denon's mighty DVD-A1UD universal player. Another expensive review that.

## Carpet booming

And then there is what Mrs S refers to as the 'amp carpet' – a growing layer of power amps taking up a lot of floor space. Admitting, in AA-meeting style, that using stereo power amps to bi-amp the rear-back channels is 'a bit of overkill' took a lot of soul-searching. Out went two Parasound Halo A21s and a Halo A51, leaving just the five Sony TA-N1 stereo power amps. Three bi-amp each speaker at the front-end, leaving one each for rear and rear-back channels. The speaker count was less painful to thin down as 11 speakers only came about for reviewing Yamaha's DSP-Z11. This left a simple seven channel array of Tannoy floorstanders.

By early January, my work was done. The kit sale had cleared 2009's Denon-related credit card bill and my existential home cinema philosophy was assured for a thoroughly less-is-more 2010.

Of course, recent introductions of Dolby Pro-Logic IIz and Audyssey DSX mean I will need decent front height and front width speakers this year. As my AVP-A1HD can't be upgraded to full DSX spec, I better contemplate a secondary processor (run from the second HDMI output of the DVD-A1UD) to supply these channels. These will, of course, need some power, so I am actively looking for two more TA-N1s to drive them. The front height speakers will be bookshelf designs so a dedicated front height subwoofer may also be on the books. Actually, speaking of subwoofers, the AVP-A1HD caters for three subwoofers so I really might have to think about another one or two Velodyne DD18s. Then again, I do need to sort a 2.35:1 screen and anamorphic lens for the projector first. Erm... ●

For more of Richard Stevenson's cinematic confessions log on to [www.homecinemachoice.com/points\\_of\\_view](http://www.homecinemachoice.com/points_of_view)

**Richard Stevenson** now understands that the first step to true enlightenment is accepting that he knows nothing





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# TECH TANTRUM

**Barry Fox** wonders whether a third dimension will be as welcome in the home as it is in the multiplex

**T**he electronics industry is always looking for the next big thing. Colour TV, the VCR, CD and DVD were all big. Flatscreen TV is huge and Blu-ray should ride on the back of HD.

I am not so sure about 3D, though. The effect – like full-blown surround – is undeniably exciting, and cinema audiences are happily paying extra to watch 3D screenings, just as they did in the 1950s. But it doesn't mean punters will rush out to replace existing HD or Full HD TVs with more expensive 3D sets and new 3D BD players.

It doesn't matter that different cinemas use different projection systems. The customer gets the right spectacles at the door. But it does matter that there's no single standard for home 3D. The Blu-ray 3D standard deliberately does not specify the type of screen needed.

Buying a 3D TV will involve a no-going-back choice between a Panasonic-style sequential display with expensive active shutter spectacles or an interlaced display with cheap passive polarised glasses. We could soon see a home version of the Dolby 3D system that uses subtly different shades of red, green and blue for the left and right eyes.

Beware the comparison between 3D and surround sound. With multispeaker surround there is no need to wear anything; with 3D there is. With surround everyone gets much the same effect; with 3D anyone who doesn't wear spectacles sees drunken double images.

In a cinema it's natural to sit still, and upright, and in a good viewing position. At home it's natural to sprawl and move around. Next time you go to a 3D cinema screening, try lolling your head on one side, and see what it does to the depth effect – and feel the headache coming on.

## Creature feature

In the 1950s Hollywood was trying to woo audiences away from new-fangled TV, but soon

gave up on 3D and concentrated on widescreen 'Scope'. But not before it made a lot of junk in 3D, too. *House of Wax* was a notable exception, and *Creature from the Black Lagoon* has achieved cult status, even though it was shot 4:3 in black-and-white.

I recently watched *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (in 2D) again, after reading about the US government nature reserve called Wakulla Springs near Tallahassee on the Gulf of Mexico. Here, fresh spring water pours out of the ground to create a crystal-clear river and near tropical jungle. Hollywood discovered Wakulla as an Amazon lookalike in the 1940s and used it to shoot the underwater sequences for one of the Johnny Weismuller Tarzan movies. In 1953/4 *Creature...* was shot there by legendary sci-fi director Jack Arnold. It was the first underwater 3D film and thereby hang some tales.

In those pre-CG days, the Creature was a tall man in a foam rubber suit; two men in fact, one for the land sequences and one for underwater. The crew tried strapping oxygen bottles to his body, but they bulged too much. So underwater actor Ricou Browning, who had previously been a lifeguard at Wakulla, came up with an idea that is still used today for underwater shows. The Creature stayed underwater for lethal lengths of time by sucking on oxygen pipes hidden amongst the rocks and waterweeds. **If you look closely you can see him going off into the weeds for a crafty puff.**

Sci-fi enthusiasts with a 3DTV will surely jump at the chance of buying *Creature* on 3D BD and watching the eerie sight of a cube of monochrome water hanging in space. But it will take more than that to make 3D the next big thing. Movies like *Up* will help, but are they really worth the cost of a new 3D system? We'll soon find out.

*Do you want to add an extra viewing dimension to your living room? Let us know: email [hcc@futurenet.co.uk](mailto:hcc@futurenet.co.uk)*

Just like a 3D Magic Eye picture, stare into **Barry Fox's** eyes long enough and you'll see something else entirely. You have been warned...





# Tech diary

The world of AV and film changes fast. **HCC's calendar** is here to make sure you don't miss out



**Foxy laddy:**  
He's coming  
your way on  
1 March

| Monday   | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday   | Friday  | Saturday   | Sunday  |
|--|---------|-----------|--|---|--|---|
|  |         |           |  | <b>12</b> <b>The Wolfman</b><br>Following seemingly endless re-shoots and other behind-the-scenes problems, this big budget re-imagining of the Universal horror finally arrives in UK cinemas today<br><a href="http://www.thewolfmanmovie.com">www.thewolfmanmovie.com</a>  | <b>13</b> <b>Cinematographe</b><br>On this day in 1894, Auguste and Louis Lumière patented the Cinematographe, a combination movie camera and projector. They then went on to film their first film, <i>Sortie de l'usine Lumière de Lyon</i> later that same year             | <b>14</b> <b>Valentine's Day</b><br>Love is in the air today and the easy thing to do would be to recommend a rom-com. But here at HCC, we'd rather settle down with the slasher-tastic <i>My Bloody Valentine 3D</i> on Blu-ray instead                    |
| <b>15</b> <b>Cirque du Freak: The Vampire's Assistant</b><br>Part <i>Twilight</i> , part <i>Harry Potter</i> , <i>The Vampire's Assistant</i> didn't make much of an impression on the box office, but might fare better with its 'tween audience when it hits DVD and Blu-ray in the UK today<br><a href="http://www.thevampiresassistant.net">www.thevampiresassistant.net</a> |         |           |  | <b>19</b> <b>Shutter Island</b><br>This Friday sees the UK cinema release of Martin Scorsese's first foray into the horror genre, and we couldn't be more excited. If this isn't one of the year's best films then we'll eat our Blu-ray players<br><a href="http://www.shutterisland.com">www.shutterisland.com</a>  |  |   |
| <b>22</b> <b>9</b><br>Produced by visionary filmmakers Tim Burton and Timur Bekmambetov, this post-apocalyptic computer-animated feature makes its bow on DVD and Blu-ray in the UK today  |         |           | <b>25</b> <b>Sound &amp; Vision 2010</b><br>Bristol's Marriott City Centre Hotel is the venue, yet again, to this popular AV and hi-fi show that gives consumers a chance to demo the latest kit from hundreds of manufacturers. It's open for three days from this Thursday<br><a href="http://www.bristolshow.co.uk">www.bristolshow.co.uk</a> | <b>26</b> <b>The Crazies</b><br>A modern version of George Romero's 1970s tale of madness in a small American town arrives in UK cinemas today. As Romero remakes go, we hope it's more <i>Dawn of the Dead</i> than <i>Day of the Dead</i><br><a href="http://www.thecrazies-movie.com">www.thecrazies-movie.com</a> | <b>27</b> <b>RIP</b><br>Legendary silent movie actress Lillian Gish died on this day in 1993. While her career spanned 75 years, she is still best known for taking the lead role in DW Griffith's controversial <i>Birth of a Nation</i>                                      | <b>28</b> <b>Record breaker</b><br>The final episode of <i>M*A*S*H</i> was first broadcast in the US on this day in 1983. Depending on the source, it drew an audience of between 106-125 million, making it the most watched television episode in history |
| <b>01</b> <b>Fantastic Mr Fox</b><br>Director Wes Anderson tries his hand at stop-mo animation with this star-studded adaptation of Roald Dahl's children's book. If you missed it at the cinema, catch it on DVD and Blu-ray from today<br><a href="http://www.fantasticmrfoxmovie.com">www.fantasticmrfoxmovie.com</a>   |         |           | <b>04</b> <b>Inaugural radio</b><br>Calvin Coolidge made history on this day back in 1925 by becoming the first President of the United States to have his inauguration broadcast on the radio   | <b>05</b> <b>Alice in Wonderland</b><br>Hot on the heels of <i>Avatar</i> is another 3D blockbuster, with Tim Burton's 19-year-old Alice returning to wonderland. Opens at cinemas and IMAX screens today<br><a href="http://disney.go.com/disneypictures">disney.go.com/disneypictures</a>                           | <b>06</b> <b>Zapruder Film</b><br>ABC's late-night show <i>Good Night America</i> was responsible for the first-ever network television screening of the Abraham Zapruder's home-movie footage of JFK's assassination on this day in 1975. Will it get ever a Blu-ray release? | <b>07</b> <b>Happy Birthday</b><br>Matthew Vaughn, producer of Guy Ritchie's <i>Lock, Stock...</i> and <i>Snatch</i> , as well as director of the upcoming Nic Cage flick <i>Kick-Ass</i> , was born on this day in 1971.                                   |
| <b>08</b> <b>Saw VI</b><br>Just because he died three films ago, don't think that Jigsaw's plan isn't still in action. Find out how the pieces all fit together when this latest slice of torture porn hits UK shelves today on DVD and Blu-ray<br><a href="http://www.saw6film.com">www.saw6film.com</a>  |         |           | <b>10</b> <b>Call waiting</b><br>Alexander Graham Bell made the world's first successful telephone call on this day in 1876. The message he chose to convey on this momentous occasion consisted of: 'Mr Watson, come here, I want to see you'   | <b>11</b> <b>HCC #180</b><br>Start saving your pennies for HCC #180. Your favourite home cinema magazine hits the stands this Thursday, packed to the gills with hardware tests, features, outspoken opinion and full-on software reviews<br><a href="http://www.homecinemachoice.com">www.homecinemachoice.com</a>   |  |   |



# Supportive



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# Global tech preview 2010

From 3D Blu-ray players and screens to the next generation of internet TVs and the growing library of AV iPhone apps, there's a lot happening in the home cinema world in 2010. Luckily, **Team HCC** has had exclusive access to all the cutting-edge kit that's on the way...



There has been a general malaise in the AV industry in recent times, at least when it comes to new formats and technologies. Since Blu-ray won its scrappily-fought battle with HD DVD there have been few ground-breaking advancements and innovations to whet the appetite of the dedicated AV-holic. Until now...

This coming year is set to be a humdinger for those interested in shiny black boxes and the sparkling tech contained within. We are to see a major new mind-boggling video format take hold on a home movie market that is still giddy with excitement about the humble



Slim was the word on LG's CES stand

Blu-ray disc. There's also to be an explosive revolution in the way the internet is used in consumer electronics – one that seems lifted straight out of science-fiction flicks. And television sets themselves are about to become more intelligent than the average parking attendant. These are exhilarating times, indeed.

However, there is so much kit on its way in the coming months that it can be tricky to follow the latest trends, so the HCC team has literally travelled the globe in order to give you a rundown of the very best gear the year has on offer. One word of warning, though: 2010 is not going to be kind on your wallet...

3D  
Blu-ray



Forward-thinking: Panasonic's 3D deck will work with your HDMI v1.3 AVR

The rush to bring 3DTV into our homes would be pointless if the content wasn't

there to drive demand. To this end, most of the major manufacturers started off the year by teasing 3D Blu-ray players that will be hitting the market in the latter half of 2010.

Having evangelised Full HD 3D for some time, it came as no surprise to find Panasonic announcing its first model, the DMP-BDT350. As expected, this forthcoming deck is able to get around the need for a new AV receiver/amp that supports HDMI 1.4 by including twin HDMI outputs – meaning that high-bandwidth 3D video can be sent directly to your screen via HDMI 1.4, while the separate HDMI 1.3 output allows the audio to be handled by existing AVRs. The BDT350 also features a beefed-up version of the company's UniPhier LSI chipset and 96kHz surround sound re-master functionality to enhance playback of CDs and other audio sources.

Samsung has its own solution to the AVR 'problem' in the form of the world's first 3D Blu-ray all-in-one system, dubbed the Samsung HT-C6390, which features wireless rears and a pair of additional speakers placed above the screen to lift the front soundstage. The brand does have a standalone 3D BD deck, too, the BD-C6900. This stylish component features a translucent top, so you can see the disc spinning, and aims to be one of the fastest-loading machines available.



SEE-THRU  
Samsung's  
BD-C6900 has a  
translucent top



Due to make its debut this Summer is Sony's BDP-S770.

Also compatible with SACDs, the DLNA-certified S770 includes Sony's Precision Cinema HD upscaling trickery and built-in Wi-Fi for wireless access to the Bravia Internet Video platform and BD-Live functionality.

Finally, while Toshiba lagged behind the competition in launching a traditional Blu-ray deck, it clearly doesn't plan to make the same mistake with 3D BD. Due to be launched in the US this Autumn (there's no confirmation on a European model yet) is its BDX3000, seen at CES 2010 in prototype form. The model will feature online streaming, 7.1-channel analogue outputs and the promise of 'a wide range of added features' that the company will reveal closer to release.

Toshiba's BDX3000, due for an Autumn release in the US, was kept behind glass at CES

Below: The S770 sees Sony's player design given a makeover

Left: The new 3D Blu-ray logo







# 3D TV

## GOGGLES

Active shutter specs are larger than polarised ones



JVC's GD-463D10 LCD uses RealD polarised glasses to deliver 3D images to its viewers

Anybody who's experienced anaglyph 3D, with its red and cyan-lensed cardboard glasses, is naturally approaching 3DTV with some trepidation. However, 2010 is to be the year when the technology in the home catches up with 3D cinema. Almost every display manufacturer has 3D ambitions, with some adopting variations on

the stereoscopic version of the tech across their new TV ranges. They may feature subtle differences, but they are all singing from the same hymn sheet – that 3D is the next big thing in home entertainment...

LG's lineup of 3DTVs amazed punters at CES

3D Full LED Slim  
55" 3D LCD TV  
3D Broadcasting Live



The Japanese giant Panasonic is perhaps in the hot seat with 3DTV, on the back of its *Avatar*-tied-in roadshow that toured the UK last year. While that featured a mammoth 103in 3D plasma, it has now unveiled its more consumer-friendly proposition, a 50in plasma dubbed the TC-P50VT25, which will go on sale in the UK later this year, probably in the Summer.

Panasonic's display offers Full HD 3D by sending 1080p pictures to each eye through active shuttered lens glasses, and the results are impressive. *HCC* enjoyed an exclusive, private demo at the brand's factory in Kadoma, Osaka; we watched a variety of clips (both animated and real life) and were blown away by the illusion of dimensionality it delivered. Images were smooth and artefact-free, and the screen size was very comfortable. The glasses themselves, while heavier than the polarized ones used in 3D cinemas, were reasonably comfortable, and can be worn over your prescription specs if needs be.

Rival manufacturer Sony is following a similar 3DTV path to Panasonic, only with LCD technology and not plasma. It will release four 3D LED-lit LCD models in its 'Signature' LX900 series this year, ranging from 40in to 60in. These screens ship with active shutter glasses and an integrated 3D transmitter – further down its lineup, in the 'Cinematic' range, punters will be able to buy '3D-ready' TVs in 46in and 52in guises, which



require an additional outlay on the glasses and transmitter – meaning you can step up to 3D as and when you want.

## LG does it different

Toshiba, with its Cell TV (see page 30) and Samsung (see box out, right) are also bringing active shutter-based 3DTVs to the UK this year. LG, however, is doing something a little different.

First unveiled at CES, LG's 47in LD920 uses passive 3D technology, allowing for far cheaper, lighter and consumer-friendly glasses – but with a loss in video resolution.

While the brand is also bringing active-lensed products out later this year, it's first

system shoots two images at your eyes simultaneously rather than frame-by-frame.

However, it will still be compatible with 3D Blu-ray.

Also at CES, JVC used its booth to show off the GD-463D10 LCD 3D pro monitor, currently shipping in the US. JVC's first step into 3D display makes use of the Xpol polarising filter method and inexpensive passive glasses for 'flicker-free stereoscopic images'. While there was no news regarding the company bringing the 3D technology to its range of TVs, JVC was instead keen to talk up its IF-2D3D1 stereoscopic processor. Also designed for the professional market, this impressive piece of tech converts 2D video to 3D in real time – very handy for content producers looking to repurpose existing 2D material, and as a tool to allow filmmakers to check their 3D footage on location.

## SMOOTH

Panasonic's 3D plasma impressed in demos



# On the trail of Samsung's superthin 3DTV

Next-gen tech to feature on 50% of the brand's 2010 LED lineup



Samsung's LCD complex at Tangjeong

Before Christmas, and before it was shown to the hordes at CES 2010, HCC flew to Samsung's Korean HQ to get an exclusive look at its first ever 3D LED TV, and were stunned. If the world's biggest TV manufacturer has anything to do with it, the future of home entertainment looks dazzlingly bright and three-dimensional.

Samsung's hold over the global TV industry looks secure, and it's influence in Korea, where it accounts for 15 per cent of the nation's GDP, is absolute. HCC began to understand this as we entered 'Samsung Digital City', where 22,000 employees live and work for the TV division. 9,000 of those are based in the central R&D tower – the tallest building in Suwon – where we were led to a closely-guarded room that contained the remarkable product lineup for 2010, including it's gorgeous, ground-breaking LED 3DTV.

This 9 Series LED panel is encased in aluminium and described as 'finger thin'. To be precise, the width is 0.3in, making it the skinniest 55in TV we've seen so far.

HS Kim, Senior Vice President (R&D) explained the 3D strategy: '3D is a game-changer and we see it being a major driver for home entertainment. Hollywood has been preparing for 3D for years. The studios used to make around 30 per cent from ticket sales and 30 per cent from video rental, but this has dropped off, so 3D is looking very appealing.'

Samsung has developed its own 3D algorithm and chipset, but is also licensing technology from 3D cinema leaders RealD. Delivering 1080p to each eye, we thought the



## Cutting-edge:

The 0.3in thin LED9000 will ship with Samsung's new touchscreen remote (see page 7 for more)

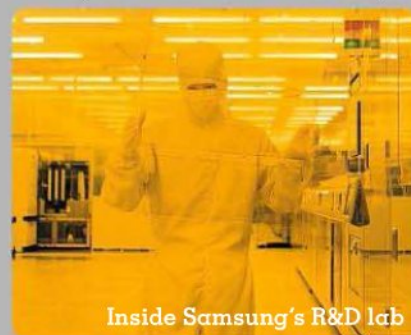
set's active shutter glasses worked well with demo material, showing no visible flicker.

'Polarising glasses reduce the resolution by half, so we use active shutter glasses,' explained HS Kim. 'And we've found that RF is better than IR. Our glasses will be available separately, and bundled with 3D television sets. 3DTV without the glasses is every engineer's goal. 3D products need to be affordable to create the market to begin with.'

Sue Shim, Senior Vice President (visual display) also believes that 2010 is the year of 3DTV: 'Consumers are saying yes, they are ready for 3D and already think it is good quality and they're excited about it. 3D is a premium feature for 2010, and will be on 50 per cent of Samsung's LED TVs in 2010.'

As for other factors steering Samsung's TV strategy, Kim lists Freeview HD tuners for the UK market, the user interface, and eco-friendliness. 'Power consumption is a big issue worldwide, especially with the new California ruling,' he confides.

What about size? 'The race to produce the thinnest screen will be over in 2010,' declares the R&D boffin. 'Samsung is now concentrating on 3D, picture quality, power consumption and multimedia connectivity.'



Inside Samsung's R&D lab



## CES 2010

All the rest of the best AV gear spotted in Las Vegas this year

### Eggcellent audio



Dolby has teamed with Acousticom, best known for its airforce flight helmets, to create this Sound Egg. Originally designed to exhibit 5.1 sound at trade fairs, Dolby is so pleased with its product that it's now on sale to the public. At \$1,450 (plus shipping), it doesn't come cheap, but the chair contains five interior drivers and a 10in subwoofer under the seat.

### Pretty Polly



Electronics firm Parrot unveiled a set of wireless speakers styled by wacky designer Philippe Starck. The Zimku Parrot by Starck stereo pair, at £1,000 for the set, features an iPod dock, Class-D amplifier, and a subwoofer in the base.

### LASS VEGAS

The CES show isn't entirely about AV technology...

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Last year was not good for OLED.

The futuristic TV tech was put on the back burner by the major manufacturers for several reasons, not least the global recession and the rapid rise of LED backlighting for LCD as a viable, and equally slim, proposition. However, anyone who's ever seen an OLED panel in the flesh knows that there's more to the format than its waistline. Its other undeniable benefits include resolution, colour reproduction and a mouse-sized carbon footprint. Therefore, it is to make a welcome return in 2010, and we may just see a genuine living room TV yet...

Certainly, the first actual television – with a digital tuner – is imminent. Although LG's EL9500 is only a 15incher, it'll be the largest commercially-available OLED set, easily beating Sony's XEL-1 by 4ins. It also beats it on price by a whopping £1,700, as the on-street tag is expected to be around £1,600. Additionally, where the Sony is a mere display, the LG has a TV tuner. And it can even play DivX HD files stored on a USB stick. Neat.

Of course, it's still a rich man's play thing – there are few who could afford that kind of cash on a desktop telly – but it's for real. And it's just a precursor for the main event.

The Korean company has also announced plans to release a 32in version in the coming year. Few details of specifications are known at present, but it will easily be the biggest OLED panel on the market. It's likely to be the most expensive to boot, but it's a definite step in the right direction.

### Prototypes

Other manufacturers are also likely to dabble with OLED in the coming year, although they have been focusing on prototype monitors

# OLED TV



and display units rather than actual TVs. Both Sony and Samsung have recently outed 30in models and, of course, given the biggest industry buzzword at present, they are both compatible with each company's 3D system.

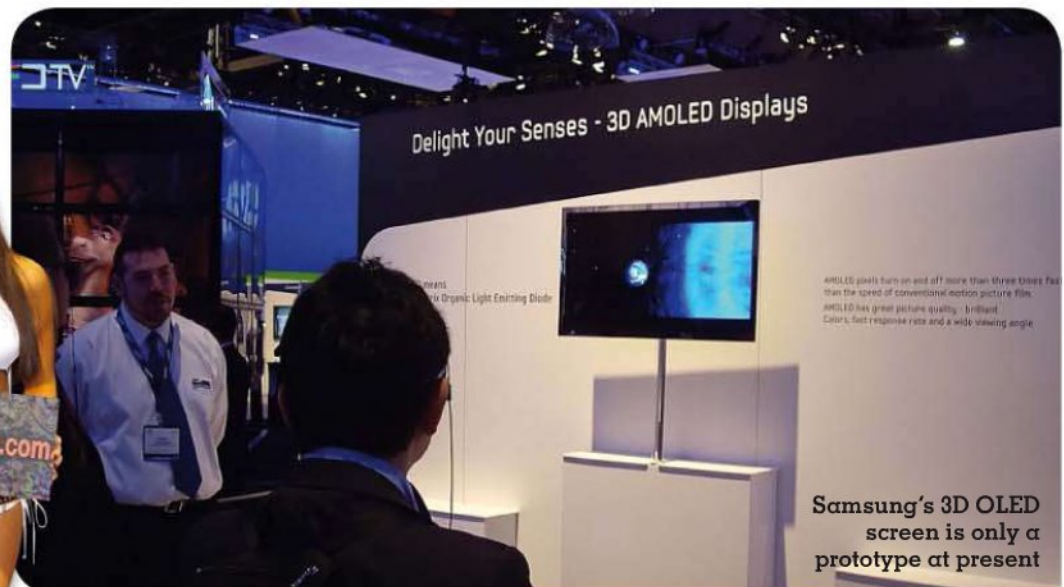
Given the hands-on demonstrations that HCC has enjoyed recently (at CES 2010 and in the Far East) OLED is a perfect match with 3D. The technology offers vast contrast ratios, image clarity and involving colours, all of which lend greater depth to 3D content. Essentially, the sharper the image, the more immersive the experience.

Certainly, 3D gaming will benefit greatly, and that's, perhaps, the market Sony and Samsung will target with the display tech first.

It wouldn't come as a major surprise, though, if Sony or Samsung release a full OLED TV in the latter part of the year to try and wrestle the initiative from LG.

LG's EL9500 is a bigger, more affordable and better-specified OLED TV than Sony's XEL-1

**SLINKY**  
We expect to see more OLED screens unveiled later this year



Samsung's 3D OLED screen is only a prototype at present



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# Online & apps



Skype video calling has been added to both Panasonic's (pictured) and LG's widget TV services

**Pick 'n' choose:** Samsung's Appstore now features Lovefilm and Muzu download services

After a tentative introduction over the last two years, online functionality in AV kit will improve dramatically in 2010. Services adopted by the next generation of TVs and Blu-ray players will offer more than simple RSS news feeds and the ability to watch skateboard accidents on YouTube; internet connectivity will not only allow your TV to tell the weather, but actually provide extra programming, interactive content, complex games, and could even replace the telephone...

Samsung's Internet@TV service, to be included in a majority of its flatscreens released from Spring, has been majorly overhauled. In addition, for the first time, it will be a mainstay of the company's mid-to-high-end range of Blu-ray decks.

It is, in essence, inspired by the iPhone, and specifically the popularity of Apps. The company has introduced its own Appstore, accessible through the internet capabilities of its kit, so that

owners can download the software and features they want. At first, this will feature mainly free content, but as time goes on, it will include premium Apps on a pay platform. Development of Samsung Apps is open-ended and available to external companies, so there is the potential that thousands of different Apps will be available for download and installation.

Initially, the manufacturer has signed deals with Lovefilm, BBC iPlayer and Muzu – which will offer movies, TV shows and music videos on-demand respectively in the UK – and there are more deals being struck with content providers all the time. Project Canvas anyone?

One restriction, though, is that all video content offered will be delivered in standard-definition to begin with. Similar content deals in the US – with movie-rental service Netflix, for example – already offer HD content and 5.1 audio, but the broadband infrastructure in the UK needs to be universally improved before this can be deemed financially viable. However, thankfully, Samsung's system allows for expansion at a later date.

## Widety woo

It's not just Samsung that is pushing widgets in 2010. Oregon Networks, which supplies Onyx – an internet TV front-end for several manufacturers, including Brit-brand Cello's iPlayer-enabled LCD TVs – now offers a Widety Store, featuring free and paid-for widgets from a variety of internet, VOD and RSS sources. The Onyx GUI already contains Twitter, weather and sports services for free, but a whole host of others will become available over the coming year.





## Skype hype

Two companies, LG and Panasonic, have both recently announced tie-ins with Skype, the VOIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) service, to run over their Infinia and Viera TV sets respectively. This will allow subscribers to chat to fellow Skype users for free, including HD (720p) videochat using a bundled USB webcam, evoking scenes from sci-fi movies such as *Back to the Future Part II* and any Philip K. Dick adaptation you can think of.

Additionally, Skype users get cheaper calls to conventional landlines and mobiles, so it could be a move that sees the central TV even replace the home phone. And with their bundled webcams picking up video and audio at healthy distances, you could even chat from the comfort of the sofa.

## i-LIFE

Apple's iPod Touch and iPhone are becoming popular AV controllers



## CONTROL

Sony's BD App will work with its new Blu-ray products



Apple's amazingly popular iPhone and iPod Touch devices are fast becoming must-have additions to a home cinema setup. To accompany Sony's new networked Blu-ray players, the company has released a free BD

Remote App for the iPhone and iPod Touch. After installation, the software allows you to control any Sony BD deck and home cinema system currently on your home network, via Wi-fi. It also shows what's playing on the machine and other pertinent information about the movie, such as cast list, via Gracenote.

Elsewhere, Newkintex has unveiled an IR remote adaptor that connects to an iPod Touch/iPhone and turns it into a universal remote.

## Back of the 'net

Essentially, in 2010, the internet is to play its biggest role in AV yet. Just about all BD players and TVs will have 'net connectivity, with many featuring in-built Wi-Fi. The only thing that will halt rapid expansion is broadband speed, but even that's on the rise.

## CES 2010

All the rest of the best AV gear spotted in Las Vegas this year

## Head and shoulders



Finished in rigid brushed metal and leather, Bowers & Wilkins' £250 P5s are certainly a cut above usual headphones, but the materials are not just for show – the sealed earplates and plush, soft pads are sealed against external noise, without the need for cancelling technologies.

## Yellow peril



Sharp will unleash a new range of screens that incorporate its unique RGBY matrix technology (Y = yellow). The brand claims the inclusion of a fourth primary colour enables the reproduction of colours which LCD TVs have been unable to accurately display until now, such as true golds and vibrant yellows.

## Pro 3D with JVC



If you want the ultimate 3D solution then start saving for JVC's DLA-SH4K projector. Costing \$175,000, this imposing unit comes with a 4K2K resolution and is, as HCC found out during a hands-on test at CES, outrageously good. Note, though, that to create a 3D effect you'll actually need two of these beasts running side-by-side. You better save twice as hard.



Microsoft caused a stir at CES with Project Natal, its controller-less gaming experience



## CES 2010

All the rest of the best AV gear spotted in Las Vegas this year

### THX for everything



Home cinema favourite Onkyo has created a high-end Blu-ray system with the stamp of approval from the discerning folk at THX. Comprising three separate components – the company's profile 2.0 BD-SP807 Blu-ray player, PA-MC5500 nine-channel power amplifier and the PR-SC5507 9.2-channel AV network controller – the system is a finely-tuned all-in-one solution that aims to take the hassle out of choosing separates. The PR-SC5507 already retails for around £1,800; the power amp and BD-spinner will follow in February and March, although prices have yet to be finalised.

### 3D got game



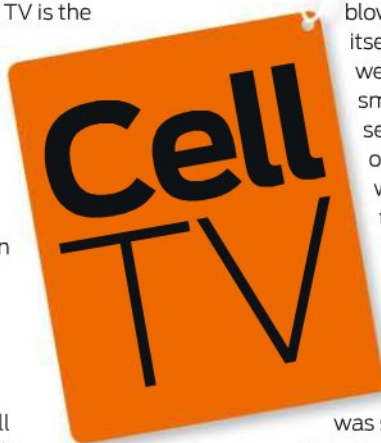
One of the major drivers for the 3D revolution will be gaming – at least, that's what projector specialist Optoma believes, with the brand showcasing two gaming-oriented 3D video-chuckers at the Las Vegas tech fest. Although they may not make it to these shores (the company has first-gen the 3D-ready EW536 and EW531 models over here), the WXGA GT720 and standard-def GT360 are aimed at the PS3/Xbox 360 and Wii respectively, and both utilise DLP Link 3D technology and pack 10W speakers. Of course, the models rely on the games being 3D-ready too, but it's a start. And the good news for shoot-em up hedz is that they don't cost an arm and a leg, with the GT360 retailing for a mere \$500.

Toshiba's Cell REGZA TV is the Pagani Zonda of televisions. It's gloriously over-specified, able to outperform pretty much any other screen and generally oozes class. Launched in Japan at the end of 2009, and heading to the Europe and US this year, it's TV reimagined.

Lying at the heart of Toshiba's titan is the Cell Broadband Engine, jointly developed by Sony, Toshiba and IBM, and more familiar to tech-heads as the brain of the PS3. Toshiba has taken the architecture and refashioned it as the heart of a TV, able to handle multiple high-definition TV streams simultaneously and process video and graphics at unparalleled speed – and then built around it using best-in-class components. The result is an LED-backlit LCD of exquisite quality.

HCC was given exclusive access to the Japanese iteration of the Cell REGZA prior to its launch, at a briefing at the brand's Tokyo HQ. In Japan, the 55in set is tricked out to the max. It has 15 tuners, ensuring it covers all of the local terrestrial and satellite options; a 2TB HDD able to simultaneously decode eight high-def channels, so you can effectively cache everything (yes, it's the ultimate in catch-up TV!); and, naturally, full media streaming from networked devices.

Quite apart from all the tuner and networking trickery, we was



blown away by the performance of the screen itself. The levels of detail held in the image were awesome, the colour gradations smooth and subtle and the black level seductively deep. We've seen many outstanding TVs over the years, but this was something else entirely. Somehow the resolution seemed better than 1920 x 1080. Everyone's favourite dark detail demo, *The Dark Knight*, looked sublime. Explosive peaks didn't squash black depth or shadow detail.

And not only was the picture quality immaculate, the audio performance was startling. The screen has a soundbar incorporating a 60W digital amp and seven high-grade speakers. Audio is so often a weak link in modern flatscreens, but not here – the soundstage produced was huge.

### The first of many

Yuichi (Hank) Sekiguchi is the group manager with Toshiba's global marketing department. He tells HCC that this is the first in a range of Cell REGZA products. Europe will see at least one before the end of 2010, and the US is getting five, with screen sizes ranging from 46-65in.

But not all will be created equal. According to Sekiguchi, the original Cell concept has to evolve and change. 'It's down to local infrastructure. The functionality of the Cell REGZA needs metadata from broadcasters, and this can vary depending on country.'

But while some functions will vary, the basic premise remains the same:



**BRAND REBORN**  
Sekiguchi says Cell REGZA gives Toshiba a new lease of life







#### Innovative interface:

Toshiba has created a unique GUI to help navigate the TBs of programming recorded by the Cell REGZA. Shows are represented by thumbnails grouped together by genre and other metadata. Sorting through them visually is a lot more fun than navigating traditional list-based EPGs



According to Hank Sekiguchi, the initial concept for the Cell TV came seven years ago. 'Cell was originally developed for a supercomputer – Sony took it for PlayStation and for us it's become a TV product.' Work eventually began in 2007 on the debut 55X1.

Toshiba has long harboured a desire to claim back the TV high ground. Back in the 1980s it was the pre-eminent home cinema TV brand. AV fans with long memories will recall how the company pioneered the development of surround sound televisions, long before AVRs became commonplace. 'Back then we had our own tube technology, things were easier...'

The company then spent years developing its own radical display technology to rival plasma and LCD. Called SED, it's technically ambitious but to date has proved too difficult to commercialise. With Cell REGZA TV, though, Toshiba has another chance. 'We feel we have been reborn,' declares Sekiguchi.

to set a new benchmark in TV performance. 'We want to bring this monster machine to high-end dealers everywhere, the kind of dealers that stocked Kuro plasmas. That was a good product, but this is much better. Plasma TVs have a status as best picture. But with a high frame-rate and an LED dimming backlight, picture-quality-wise Cell REGZA is even better.'

Toshiba has confirmed the set is coming to Europe but has yet to announce an exact specification for a UK model. It seems a fair bet, though, that two Freeview HD tuners and at least 1TB of recording storage space would be standard.

It's also certain that this second-generation set will be 3D compatible. Indeed, such is the power of the Cell processor that Toshiba claims that it can convert regular 2D material into 3D 'in near real time.' Of course, Samsung is making similar noises about on-the-fly 2D-to-3D video conversion, although its chippery will struggle to match the brawn of Cell (which has eight 3.2GHz processor cores delivering 200 gigaflops).

The Cell processor (the star-shaped component) is the heart of Toshiba's super high-end new TV

**BAR FIGHT**  
The TV's soundbar uses seven drivers and a 60W amp





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# 1&1





**Team HCC** pays respect to one of Hollywood's made men

# The Good Fella

**I**t's no bad thing that Martin Marcantonio Luciano Scorsese didn't follow his parents into the clothing business in New York's Garment District. By taking him to the movies, they helped instead launch 'Marty' on a glittering career that has spanned almost half a century, directing over 25 movies, along with multiple credits as a producer, screenwriter and actor.

In his early years, Scorsese developed a style that drew on fast edits, eclectic music and small budgets. Influences ranged from low-budget director Samuel Fuller, French New Wave auteur Jean Luc Godard, and his friend actor-director John Cassavetes. New York street life was a regular theme, often with fellow Italian-American Robert De Niro in front of the camera.

For Scorsese, De Niro has played a string of brooding, psychotic characters, including the self-destructive boxing champion Jake La Motta in *Raging Bull*; Travis Bickle, the eponymous anti-hero of *Taxi Driver*; and the scary-as-hell convicted rapist Max Cady in *Cape Fear*. The duo made eight films together from 1973 to 1995, a heavyweight partnership unrivalled in Hollywood – until

Scorsese teamed up with Leonardo DiCaprio, that is...

## Second time around

With DiCaprio as his lead, Scorsese's career has enjoyed a second lease-of-life, making the \$100m historical epic *Gangs of New York*, the Howard Hughes biopic *The Aviator*, which garnered eleven Oscar nominations, and *The Departed* – not just Scorsese's highest-grossing film, but the one that earned him an overdue Academy Award for Best Director.

Despite an association with the crime/gangster genre, Scorsese hasn't been scared to tackle new themes from time to time – check out the satirical *King of Comedy*, the highly-controversial *Last Temptation of Christ*, high-society drama *The Age of Innocence*, or *No Direction Home: Bob Dylan*, the biopic that used a clutch of men and women to play the US songsmith.

Indeed, his latest film *Shutter Island* (in cinemas now, again with DiCaprio) is another departure for the 69-year-old – a horror thriller set on an island nowhere near Manhattan, let alone the Bronx. All the same, past experience leads us to think it's probably brilliant. Long may Scorsese continue! ●

**Old timer:** Scorsese's feature film debut was back in 1967





## Quintessential Scorsese... Getting violent with the *Gangs of New York*



### 1 Confess your sins

*Gangs...* opens with a fight 'twixt the immigrant Dead Rabbits gang, led by Liam Neeson's Priest Vallon...



### 2 Nice hats

... and the American-born Nativists, run by Daniel Day-Lewis' grotesque William Cutting, aka Bill the Butcher



### 3 Two tribes go to war

As the fight unfolds, Scorsese's rapid edits generate an incredible sense of ferocity without confusing the viewer



### 4 Paint the town red

Before long, the snow covering the ground has been turned pink by all the spilled blood...

## Must own...



### Goodfellas

Warner Home Video → All-region BD £25 Approx

Ask anyone to name their favourite Scorsese flick and nine times out of ten it'll be this epic collaboration with writer Nicholas Pileggi. But there's a good reason why – it's an incredible film, up there with *The Godfather* in mafia movie terms.

**16.42:** Scorsese's roaming POV camera walks us through the Bamboo Lounge and introduces a memorable cast of characters (including Fat Andy, Frankie the Wop and Freddie No Nose) in this brilliantly choreographed scene.



### Raging Bull

20th Century Fox → All-region BD £23 Approx

A thrilling, bruising biopic of boxer Jake La Motta, shot in raw black-and-white and boasting a career-best performance from De Niro as the punch-drunk fighter, *Raging Bull* is one of Scorsese's very best.

**00.42:** The film's opening – a locked-off shot of the ring, with the credits on the right of the screen and an isolated La Motta shadow boxing on the left – is a truly iconic image.

**99.18:** Jake La Motta and Sugar Ray Robinson go at it for the last time.



### The King of Comedy

20th Century Fox → R2 DVD Special Edition → £16 Approx

Scorsese has directed comedy (albeit the darker, more offbeat kind) several times, and the best yet is *The King of Comedy*, with De Niro playing a stand-up comedian who will go to any length – even kidnapping a talkshow host – to make it big.

**21.36:** Rupert Pupkin (De Niro) rehearses his material with the aid of a mock-up TV studio in his mother's basement, including life-size cardboard standees of Liza Minelli *et al.*



### Taxi Driver

Sony Pictures → R2 DVD Special Edition → £16 Approx

One of the defining films of the 1970s, *Taxi Driver* is a bleak and confrontational movie that cemented Marty's position as one of the most important and electric filmmakers in America, and launched Robert De Niro to stardom.

**02.09:** While the anamorphic 1.85:1 transfer does its best, the DVD still looks a little rough in places.

We want a Blu-ray release now!

**63.09:** 'You talking to me?' De Niro + gun + mirror = legendary scene.

## Worth seeing...



### The Aviator

Walt Disney HE → R2 DVD Special Edition → £21 Approx

The story of rebel billionaire Howard Hughes provides the meat for this sumptuous biographical flick. It lacks the pace and verve of Scorsese's best films, but is still an entertaining ride.

**02.13:** For the film's first act – taking us from 1927 to the mid-'30s – Scorsese utilises a green and red colour palette that evokes the Two-Strip Technicolor technique of the '20s. Clever.

**99.50:** Hughes' crash landing gives the DVD's Dolby Digital 5.1 soundtrack plenty to work with.



### The Departed

Entertainment in Video → Region B BD → £30 Approx

Scorsese surprised many by opting to remake the Asian cinema smash *Infernal Affairs*, but the source material is perfect for his crime thriller sensibilities.

**77.09:** Jack Nicholson has never looked as devilish as Scorsese makes him seem here – bathed in red lights in his private box as he watches an opera.

**136.29:** The film's undercover cop and undercover criminal finally come face-to-face. Which, if either, will walk away alive?



### Casino

Universal Pictures → All-region BD £20 Approx

Five years after *Goodfellas*, Scorsese teamed up again with writer Nicholas Pileggi for another fact-based tale of the American mob, this time about its rise and fall in the casinos of Las Vegas.

**22.12:** Sharon Stone's Ginger appears on the scene and sends the betting chips (and De Niro's mobster heart) flying. **67.43:** *Casino* is one of Marty's most visually stunning films (especially in HD), but that doesn't mean it skimps on the red stuff. As proven by this meeting between a head and a vice.



### Kundun

Walt Disney HE → R2 DVD £15 Approx

Scorsese's biopic of the 14th Dalai Lama suffers from an episodic nature and a feeling that it lacks confidence in its narrative. *Kundun* looks beautiful, but ultimately becomes too bogged down in simple propaganda.

**96.28:** The Dalai Lama's vision of being surrounded by thousands of dead monks remains one of the most haunting sequences Scorsese has ever committed to celluloid. A pity the DVD's non-anamorphic transfer lacks the resolution to do it justice.



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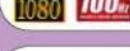
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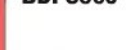
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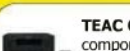
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# INSTALLS

→ **Smarthome highlights** INTEGRATED SYSTEMS EUROPE The largest CI expo outside of the US takes over Amsterdam **SPEAKER HEAVEN** In-walls from PMC and Monitor Audio **CERTIFIED AV-HOLIC!** A pair of avid *HCC* readers guide you through their home theatre setup



## Room at the top

Want to turn your attic into a stunning home theatre? Then check out this install on page 40



# Integrated Systems for pros only

You weren't able to attend ISE 2010, but you need to know why it's essential to CI

Last Summer we told you all about the UK's leading event for the custom install trade, CEDIA Expo UK. A must-attend event, but the only way you can get in is to impersonate a custom install professional. We'll have more from the re-branded Expo in a couple of months (it's now called The Home Technology Event in association with CEDIA), but in the meantime our attention turns to the Netherlands, and Integrated Systems Europe (ISE for short), comfortably the biggest CI trade event outside of the US.

Now into its seventh year, ISE has grown into something of a monster from its humble beginnings in 2004. Originally staged at Geneva's Palexpo, it is now in permanent annual residence in Amsterdam's RAI – a huge stage for what is now a huge event. Sprawling across eight halls, with over 500 exhibitors, the four-day 2010 event in early February promised to be even bigger than the record-breaking 2009, pre-registrations being up 20 per cent before the show. (Final numbers were yet to be confirmed at the time of writing.)

## Best in show

No other Europe-based custom install show comes close to ISE in terms of exhibition size or the range of new technologies on display. It has everything a CI professional needs, all under one roof. And away from the show floor, there are a variety of education sessions to ensure that Europe's home cinema pros continue to learn, meaning we, the consumers, get the best possible home cinema installs when we part with our hard-earned cash.

We'll have in-depth coverage of ISE next issue, but here (and below) are some of the highlights.

CEDIA UK held its own daily seminars in the midst of Hall 1, including the following: Technology



Trends in Home Cinema, Audio and Video; Hiding Technology – Solutions and Techniques; and a Home Cinema Design workshop. The organisation is a strategic partner with ISE, and regards the event as essential.

Philips Pronto (a huge name in CI) travelled up from Eindhoven to promote its innovative programming techniques, whilst American brand NuVo Technologies showcased its Music Port Server and Colour Touch Pad (pictured) – key kit for installers. Elsewhere, D-Box Technologies continued its global roadshow of its body-shaking D-Box Motion system, while high-end TVs and projectors from the likes of Runco, SIM2, ProjectionDesign, LG and Samsung made it another eye-catching event you (unfortunately) couldn't attend!

Next year we recommend you don that custom installer disguise and see for yourself what all the fuss is about...

For more info visit [www.iseurope.org](http://www.iseurope.org)



**Touch of class:** NuVo Technologies' Colour Touch Pad adds style and simplicity to multiroom control

## Electronics ecstasy



AudioControl, the Seattle-based manufacturer of CI processors, receivers, amplifiers, and RoomEQ gear was keen to wow ISE visitors with its Maestro M3 pre-amp. The gives users the unique ability to extend video and audio signals over CAT5/6 wiring via AudioControl's Active Balanced Outputs. Among the twenty video sockets are five discrete HDMI inputs, with a high-quality internal video scaler allowing for upconverting, scaling and frame conversion of all video sources to HDMI.

## Speaker heaven



Loudspeakers featured throughout ISE, especially in-wall and hidden varieties, and there were plenty from traditional loudspeaker manufacturers. Highlights included Luton-based company PMC, which demo'd its new specialist service to installers – a bespoke Wafer speaker, with grille cloth printing option (pictured). Also making an impression was Monitor Audio's micro-designed 80mm CPC120 spotlight speaker designed to fit in a standard halogen down-lighter hole, and Bowers & Wilkins' in-wall and in-ceiling CI 600 Series

## Take control!



CI relies on control systems to operate the essential kit that high-end setups demand, and the biggest name is undoubtedly Crestron. The company showcased its DigitalMedia system to installers, one which copes perfectly well with HD content delivery, and accepts, manages and distributes all analogue video and audio (including stereo, SPDIF, and 7.1 surround sound); Ethernet; USB; KVM; power and control – over CAT5e or fibre. Another highlight was Niko's vast range of top-line control products, including its innovative LED RGB lighting control and LED light strips.

## Mounting solutions



Mounting gurus Peerless announced a new distribution arrangement – the newly formed Peerless-AV Europe – to make products easily available to AV distributors, installers and specifiers across the continent. Product highlights included the extended Slimline range of universal ultra-slim flatpanel mounts, which has been nominated for an InAVation pro-industry technology award. Other wall-mount brands hoping to catch the install trade's eye at ISE included Vogel, Omni-Mount, Chief and Future Automation.





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# Room at the top

There's more to this loft-based cinema room than meets the eye, says

**Mark Craven**



## Kit Checklist

**Epson:** TW5800 projector  
*Epson's flagship projector until very recently, the TW5800 is a worthy addition to any cinema, with ISF certification and HQV-Reon VX processing*

**Seymour AV:** Acoustically-transparent projector screen

**Imerge:** MSI Server and 6TB Xiva Safe

**Artcoustic:** 3 x Spitfire Studio Monitor L/C/R speakers

**Artcoustic:** 4 x Diablo Monitor X2 loudspeakers

**Artcoustic:** 2 x Spitfire subwoofers

**Artcoustic:** 3 x PA-1800 amplifiers

**NAD:** T785 AV receiver

**Sky:** Sky+HD


**Nintendo:** Wii console

**Nevo:** SL remote control

**Clipsal:** C-Bus lighting control system

**Silent Gliss:** Motorised blinds





The Epson TW5800 projector is ceiling mounted behind the cinema seats

Before installers Adustum Ltd. got involved, this cinema room was actually the space above a double garage, split into a home gym and a small bedroom. Now given a new lease of life as a projection-based home theatre and 'social' bar area, we doubt the owner finds much time to lift his weights, wherever they've ended up.

The company had already done work for the client before, fitting a Sonos system into an audio infrastructure that already existed in the property when he bought it, as well as adding a 50in Pioneer plasma in the lounge and a 42in MirrorMedia LCD TV in the bedroom. However, as can be seen from the photos here, the latest job was a much more demanding project.

Everything was stripped out of the room, leaving the company a blank canvas to start working with. The focal wall of the room is dominated by a custom-made cabinet. This houses the Seymour AV projector screen, which is the biggest size that could be fitted into the sloping roof-space, and the bulk of the system's AV equipment, stored out of sight by drawbridge doors and kept well-ventilated by a pair of extractor fans that come on when the cinema is booted up.

As the owner was keen to try and keep everything discreet and out of the way, the install team opted for a 7.2-channel Artcoustic system for the audio – with the front L/C/R speakers and twin subwoofers housed behind the projector screen.

What we like most about the system is its eye-catching finish and effective use of space. The various different forms of lighting provide real ambience, and the quirky-but-comfy seats can be moved about – one drawback with fixed cinema seating is the inflexibility.

The room was made-over from scratch, allowing the owner to achieve a sleek, stylish finish



## 42 INSTALL

### A Clever tech

NAD's T785 AV receiver packs 7 x 200W of amplification into its solid, premium-grade build, and the brand's innovative Modular Design Construction (MDC) means it can be easily upgraded

### B Forward thinking

While the NAD receiver looks after the rear speakers, the system makes use of a trio of Artcoustic PA-1800 amps to drive the twin subwoofers and front speakers.

### C Boom! Shake the room

The install doesn't lack for big bass, thanks to this pair of Artcoustic Spitfire subwoofers, each employing four 10in long-throw woofers.

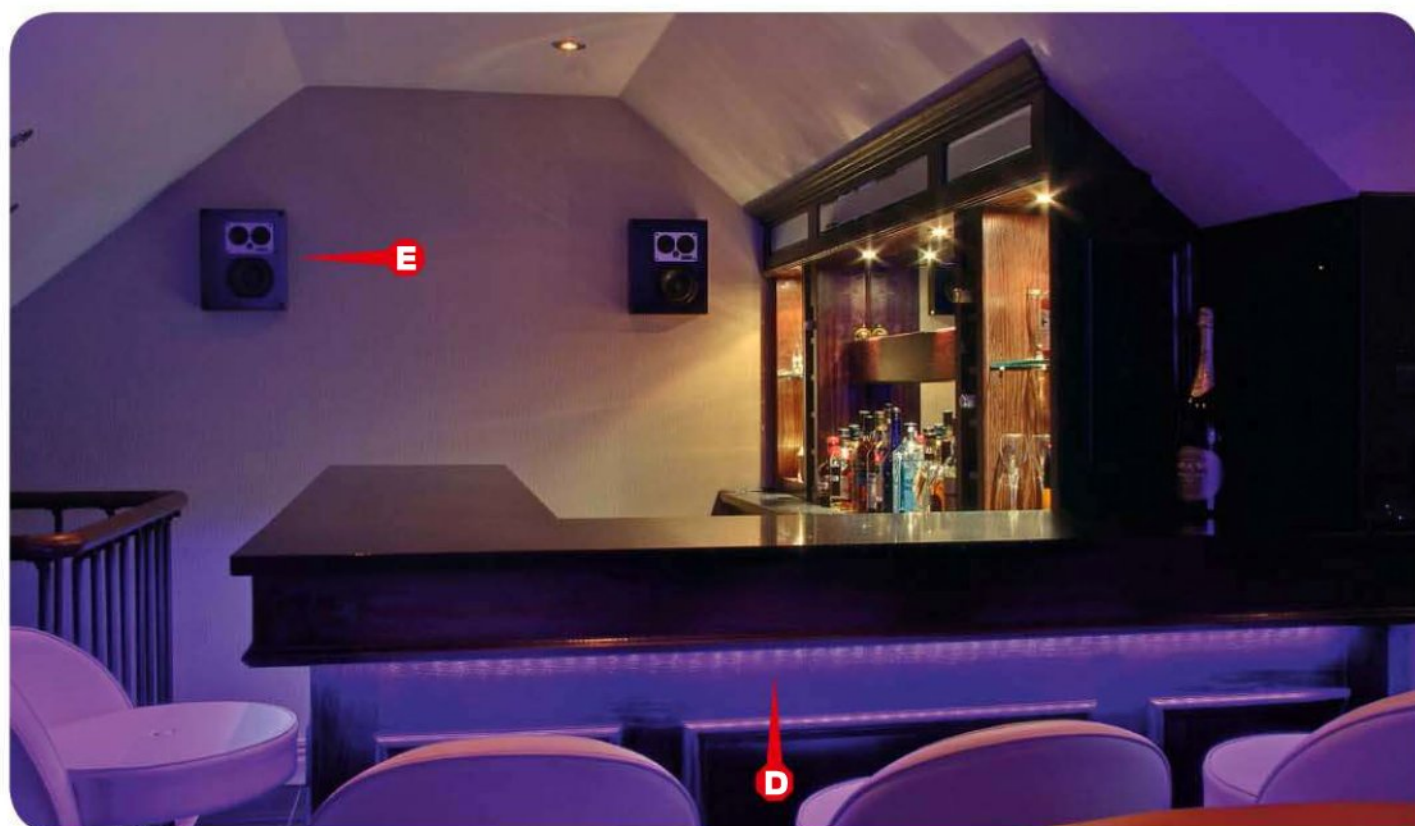
### D Let there be light

Ambience in the room is handled by a Clipsal C-bus lighting control system that can be set for different moods. 'The idea is that when you are sitting watching a movie only the perimeter lights are on, but when it's a sociable night there's some funky lighting around the bar as well,' says installer Jamie Lunn.

### E Rear speakers

Surround audio is delivered through a quartet of Artcoustic Diablo Monitor X2 speakers. These two-way wallhanging monitors pair twin X2 tweeters with a 5.5in long-throw mid-woofer.

**Going down:** The staircase next to the bar leads to another room containing a 40in Sony TV and pool table





# Living Entertainment

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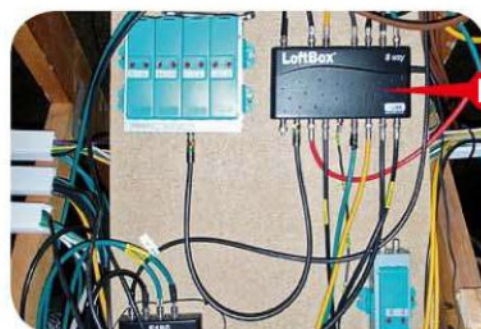
These photos feature just a small selection of Musical Images' installation work over the past 20 years.

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# Certified: AV-holic!

Every issue, an **HCC reader** invites you to take a tour of their beloved home cinema setup...



**Hi-def duo:**  
Terry and Maxine are proof that your AV hobby needn't ruin your marriage

## Introduce yourselves...

Terry and Maxine Palmer, 43 and 40, but going on 16!

## Are you AV addicts?

Yes! Since Pro-Logic became widely available we have been home cinema fans.

We recently built an extension to our home and incorporated a lot of current tech as well as future-proofing where we could – including over 900 metres of cabling! A Zone 2 output can be sent to most rooms.

## What's in your kit rack?

A Yamaha RX-V3900 AVR, Panasonic DMP-BD50 Blu-ray deck, Sky+HD box, a Sony PS3 and a Nintendo Wii. My screen is a Pioneer KRP600; for speakers I have a Canton CD10 cinema package, but have added extra satellites – two in-ceiling Canton 650s for the rear channels and two extra CD10s hooked up to the Yamaha's presence channels.

In the loft is a twisted pair distribution amp with which we

use Madnat PTP-CA01 Baluns; at the other end of the technology spectrum is an original 1985 Atari Gauntlet machine – not sure how I'm ever going to integrate that into the setup though!

## What's next on your list?

Probably something like Apple TV or a media server. Disc storage is an issue so it would be nice to stream some of our less-watched movies. I'd buy Sky multiroom if it could network multiple boxes.

## How much have you spent on your AV habit over the years?

Over the years, about £20K on hardware... but I have NO idea how much on media!

## What's your current fave disc?

Right now, I'd say *Zulu* on Blu-ray, and we're big fans of *Mama Mia*. High on the all-time list is *Jaws* – cinema at its finest.

## Are you excited about 3D?

Not so much. We've seen some great stuff in Orlando in the theme parks, but I'm sure it would be distracting at home.

## Room essentials

### A King Kuro

Bigscreen duties are handled by this 60in Pioneer

### B Disc dilemma

With all these movies to store, Terry and Maxine are considering a media server

### C Feeling the Presence

Additional height speakers are wired into the Yamaha amplifier's Presence channels for 9.1 surround!

### D Lofty ambitions

Over 900m of AV cabling has been fitted to the house, much of it controlled via a distribution amp in the attic

## Join the club

Do you want to see your home cinema system featured in the pages of *Home Cinema Choice*? If so, log on to [www.homecinemachoice.com/avholic](http://www.homecinemachoice.com/avholic) where you'll find all the information you need.

## Old School:

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# REVIEWS

→ **Hardware highlights** JVC Is the DLA-HD950 the best home cinema projector around? **PHILIPS** Second-gen LED-lit 46in TV with online capabilities **TOSHIBA** Debut Blu-ray player from the HD DVD pioneer **KEF** Entry-level 5.1 floorstander system **DENON** High-end AV receiver and universal BD deck **GROUPTEST** Sub-£1,000 Full HD projectors **AND MUCH MORE!**

## Towering triumph?

Does Bowers & Wilkins CM series sound as good as it looks? Turn to page 58 to find out...



### HCC Ratings key

|               |           |
|---------------|-----------|
| Outstanding   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Above average | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Acceptable    | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Disappointing | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Dire          | 1 2 3 4 5 |

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→ **Specifications**

HD Ready: yes including 1080p24  
Component video: yes 1 input  
HDMI: yes 2 v1.3 HDMI inputs  
PC input: yes 1 D-Sub  
12V trigger: yes 1 input  
Resolution: 1920 x 1080  
Brightness (claimed): 900 ANSI  
Lumens  
Contrast ratio (claimed): 50,000:1  
Dimensions:  
365(w) x 167(h) x 478(d)mm  
Weight: 11.2kg  
Features: ISF C3 support; THX  
certification and preset mode; 16  
aperture settings; gamma presets  
and user-definable slot; colour  
management system; sharpness  
adjustment; Clear Motion Drive  
processing; Inverse Telecine  
processing; HQV Reon-VX  
processing; composite and  
S-video inputs





# JVC's latest D-ILA diva

JVC's HD950 projector boasts a THX stamp and cinematic pictures to die for, reckons a drooling **John Archer**

**J**ust when the likes of Sony, Vivitek and Epson thought it was safe to get back in projector waters, JVC's D-ILA technology is back, making its rivals' lives very uncomfortable again with the DLA-HD950. The DLA-HD950 is a

high-end (£6,000) model that should be amply equipped to show how far JVC's D-ILA talents have progressed since 2009's excellent HD350 and HD750. Especially as, like the HD750, the HD950 has breezed through the Certified Display Program of the world-renowned THX AV kit evaluation group.

From the outside, the HD950 doesn't actually show much sign of progression over its HD750 forebear. That's not really a bad thing, though, since the elegant elliptical profile, curved rear corners, appealing glossy finish, recessed lens barrel and Sherman tank-like build quality are right up your average AV nut's street.

As I expect of a £6K projector, the flexibility and finesse of the HD950's fully motorised optical adjustments is impressive. The zoom extends to an excellent 2x and you can shift the image 80 per cent up or down vertically, or 34 per cent horizontally. The latter should allow you to forgo the haphazard keystone correction system for getting the edges of your pictures straight.

The HD950 can also be used with an external anamorphic lens, and its lens aperture can be set to one of 16 positions depending on your personal tastes/room set up, compared with

just three available on its cheaper sibling, the HD550.

## Ready for your room

JVC has made no secret about its desire to make headway in the custom install market, so it's natural that this PJ's connections include an RS-232 control port and a 12V trigger output.

Inside, the HD950's optical wire grid D-ILA engine produces a claimed brightness output of 900 Lumens and contrast ratio of 50,000:1. This latter figure is particularly remarkable because it's a native figure, achieved without resorting to an image-dimming dynamic iris like those found on LCD and SXRD projectors.

While the HD950 has so far talked a good talk, it hasn't really explained why it's better than the HD750. But if you look closely enough, there are potentially significant differences. For a start, the HD950 is licensed with the ISF C3 system, enabling trained engineers to professionally calibrate the projector for your particular room and screen characteristics.

Then there's the HD950's use of Clear Motion Drive processing. This proprietary JVC engine generates extra intermediate frames to reduce judder and boost clarity. **Other key features include a dedicated THX picture setting mode:** numerous Gamma presets, plus loads of flexibility for defining your own setting; and a colour management system that allows you to finetune the hue, saturation and brightness of all six of the primary video colours.

It's worth stressing, too, that the HD950 doesn't skimp on 'general' picture processing, with the widely acclaimed HQV Reon-VX video processor onboard, complete with excellent I/P conversion, scaling and full 10bit 4:4:4 processing.

## The darkness

Even though rival projection technologies have made considerable advances in the black level department recently, the HD950 stands out from the crowd when you're watching dark scenes such as the opening space battle of *Star Wars III*, recorded in HD from Sky (well, I had to go for a George Lucas film given this projector's THX certification!).

There are three reasons why dark scenes look so tasty on the HD950. First, it just gets closer to producing a real, cinematic black colour than any other sub-£10K projector I've seen. Second, since it doesn't need to reduce brightness to produce a convincing black level, it makes dark scenes look much punchier, and more stable and consistent than projectors that use dynamic irises.

Finally, the fact that the HD950 can maintain high brightness and deep black level response within the same frame allows it to reproduce levels of subtlety and clarity, when it comes to greyscale and shadow detail, that you just don't get anywhere else without spending megabucks. For instance, during the raid of the dark Nazca tomb in *Indiana Jones and The Kingdom of The Crystal Skull* (Blu-ray, another Lucas connection), I got a much richer sense of the texture and >



# PJ tech talk...

D-ILA isn't the only projector format out there, so here's a quick guide to the pros and cons of the different technologies available

## DLP (Digital Light Processing)

Developed by Texas Instruments, DLP systems are based around 'Digital Mirror Devices' (DMDs), which comprise hundreds of thousands of tiny, individually controllable mirrors set on the back of a controller chip.

The projectors come in two configurations. The most common option uses a single DMD chip, with colour provided by a spinning 'wheel' containing a number of colour segments – usually six. Much more expensive options use three DLP chipsets – one each for the red, green and blue colours. This removes 'the rainbow effect' (see Cons).

### Pros

1. Produces a deeper, richer black level response than similarly-priced LCD projectors.
2. Colours don't degrade with use as fast as they can with LCD tech.
3. Not usually any pixellation or 'screen door' effect.

### Cons

1. The colour wheel can reduce brightness and cause buzzing/whining noise, plus the rainbow effect, where red, green and blue colour stripes flit over bright objects in your peripheral vision.
3. Low-level grey/green dot crawl during dark scenes.

## LCD (Liquid Crystal Display)

LCD projectors use translucent liquid crystal panels through which light is passed. The individual pixels in these panels can be opened to let light through or shut to stop it. Even budget LCD PJs use three LCD panels, so no colour wheels are required.

### Pros

1. LCD projectors are immune to the rainbow effect.
2. Pictures tend to be bright, and look very sharp.

### Cons

1. Some LCD projectors show a grid-like effect over pictures, and let you see the individual pixels that make up the picture.
3. LCD projectors lose colour saturation/accuracy over their lifetime.
4. Can struggle to deliver good black levels and contrast.

## D-ILA (Direct-Drive Image Light Amplification)

Exclusive to JVC, D-ILA is a variation on Liquid Crystal on Silicon (LCoS) technology.

LCoS is based around liquid crystals on a reflective mirror substrate, with those crystals opening or closing to let light reflect from the mirror or be blocked off. LCoS projectors generally use separate chipsets for the core red, green and blue elements.

D-ILA improves on LCoS by allowing closer pixel spacing, using vertically oriented pixels to boost contrast and adding an inorganic alignment layer for extra stability.

D-ILA also sports a smoothing technology that reduces irregularities in the liquid crystal alignment, reducing light wastage. JVC added the 'Wire Grid Optical Engine' system to D-ILA in 2007, removing the need for a light polariser, further reducing light leakage, and improving contrast.

### Pros

1. Delivers arguably the best native contrast in the domestic projector world.
2. Closely-spaced pixels remove pixellation and screen door effect concerns.
3. Colour tones benefit from the natural contrast.
4. Images are stable, since D-ILA projectors don't need dynamic irises.

### Cons

1. Not the brightest projection technology around.

2. The fact that only one brand does D-ILA means prices might struggle to stay competitive.

## SXRD (Silicon X-Tal Reflective Display)

Like D-ILA, Sony's exclusive SXRD technology is also based around LCoS, but it differs in a number of key ways. First, a combination of new silicon driving circuitry, Silicon Wafer Process Technology, and a tweaked Liquid Crystal Device design results in a 2.4x



increase in pixel density and 10x improvement in inter-pixel spacing. In fact, Sony claims its SXRD system delivers the smallest inter-pixel spacing ever.

SXRD also uses a unique liquid crystal material, where the liquid crystal molecules are aligned vertically to the cell substrates. This improves driving voltages and higher optical properties, boosting contrast claims.

SXRD additionally claims a 2.5 millisecond response time, which should counter motion blur.

### Pros

1. No visible pixel structure.
2. Extremely high detail levels.
3. Punchy pictures.
4. Better contrast than LCD.

### Cons

1. Dynamic iris requirement can lead to brightness instability.
2. Green tones used to be over-dominant, but the latest SXRD models have improved this issue.

**Sony's SXRD technology is a variant on LCoS**





Twin HDMI inputs, component, RS232, 12V trigger... Yep, the gang's all here

detail of the tomb's walls on the HD950 than I did on, say, Sony's similarly specced VW85.

The HD950's subtlety isn't limited to shadow detailing, either. It also seems better at reproducing subtle colour tone shifts than any of JVC's previous projectors – a fact which inevitably helps pictures look more three-dimensional and natural. As natural as two Jedi knights fighting a light-sabre battle on a lava planet ever could look, anyway...

To get colours looking precisely how I wanted them, I had to visit the colour calibration screen. But if you can't be bothered with this, either the THX or Cinema 2 settings deliver very impressive 'preset' results.

As noted before with D-ILA projectors, **the HD950's Full HD images are stunningly sharp and detailed**, clearly reproducing the grain in a good HD movie transfer, and picking out all those HD essentials like skin pores, blades of grass and Harrison Ford's wrinkles during Indy's adventures on South American plains.

Add to all these glories an absence of noise (colour moire, the rainbow effect, visible pixel structure and dot crawl are all dismissed), a general feeling of jaw-dropping precision, and an exemplary running noise (JVC has somehow turned one of the noisier projection technologies into one that runs almost silently, and the low quoted 19dB figure seems entirely believable), and you truly have an awe-inspiring performance for a £5K-£6K price point.

## AV/CV

**Product:** A high-end D-ILA home cinema projector with a custom install focus

**Position:** The HD950 sits above the new entry-level HD550, but below the upcoming HD990 flagship

**Peers:** Sony VPL-VW85

That's not to say I have nothing to moan about, though. I didn't take to the Clear Motion Drive system at all, for instance, finding its visible side effects tough to live with, even when watching HD (though it's not designed for use with 1080p24 BD material). It's just as well you can switch it off, although doing this inevitably results in a little judder in the pictures. But to me, at least, this feels sympathetic to the experience of watching a film in a cinema, and is never bad enough to actually distract you.

## Unforgiving accuracy

My only other concern is that the HD950's exceptional accuracy makes it very unforgiving of poor-quality sources. For instance, while playing *Dragon's Age* on the Xbox 360, I became aware of some quite distracting blocking and striping noise around the edges of some objects that I'd been blissfully unaware of while playing the game previously on Vivitek's budget, sub-£1K H1085 projector (see p83).

Of course, being negative about the HD950 because it's too accurate isn't fair. But I just thought you should know, in case you're thinking of feeding one loads of Freeview broadcasts or something daft...

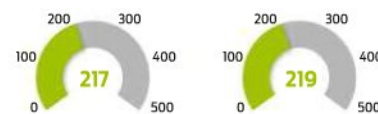
So let's finish on the high the HD950 so richly deserves. It's an incremental improvement on the HD750 rather than a huge advance, but given how good the HD750 was, the fact that the HD950 improves on it at all – especially with colours and setup flexibility – has to be a cause for celebration ●

**Lazy eye:** JVC is persisting with its asymmetrical design



## Tech Labs

### Power consumption: Watts



**White screen:** With a white 100IRE signal, consumption is reasonable for a big projector such as this

**Test footage:** We measured no significant change in power consumption with live movie footage

### Contrast: ratio



**Picture:** An excellent contrast ratio in Natural mode of over 25,000:1.

### Colour temp: Kelvin



**Presets:** A wide range of operating modes and CT presets, plus full user adjustment of R/G/B levels to deliver 6,500K.  
Natural: 4,293K  
Stage: 4,392K  
Cinema 1: 4,798K  
THX: 6,779K

## HCC VERDICT

JVC DLA-HD950  
£6,000

**Highs:** Produces the best HD pictures in its class; runs quietly; flexible  
**Lows:** The (optional) Clear Motion Drive processing generates too many artefacts; very unforgiving of poor source material

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5  
**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5  
**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5



The LED-backlit 46PFL9704 touts an eye-catching silver bezel



#### AV/CV

**Product:** A 46in TV with a direct LED backlight system, Ambilight, and Perfect Pixel HD processing

**Position:** Right up at the top of Philips' current TV range – apart from the 21:9 ratio 56PFL9954

**Peers:** Toshiba 46SV685; Samsung 46B8000; LG 42SL9500



# Day of the diode

Philips' second-generation LED TV leaves **John Archer** awestruck



Using LED backlighting in LCD TVs is no longer news. Over the last few months we've seen a flurry of new TVs from a growing number of brands all exploiting the technology. Yet the Philips 46PFL9704H makes LED feel all shiny and futuristic again, simply by virtue of how damn good it is.

The 46PFL9704's play for your AV heart begins as soon as you take in its crisp, metallic (brushed aluminium, metallurgy fans), two-tone design, offset by the spectacle of Philips' Ambilight system spilling from three of the TV's sides. Its siren call merely grows louder, too, with the discovery of five HDMI's, an Ethernet port and a USB input among its connections.

The 46PFL9704's feature count, meanwhile, is fearsome, even by Philips' usual 'kitchen sink' standards. The interesting stuff starts, of course, with that all-important LED backlighting system.

This takes the 'traditional' direct approach, rather than the edge-mounted system pushed by ultra-slim TVs like Samsung's B7000 and B8000 models. As a result, the 46PFL9704 can deliver local dimming, where clusters of LEDs can have their brightness adjusted individually depending on the content of the part of the picture they serve.

In theory this allows pitch blacks (where the LED arrays are switched off) to sit right along side ultra-bright whites (where the LED arrays are switched on fully). What's more, the 46PFL9704 sports a massive 224 individually-controllable LED segments – 75 per cent more than was present in last year's 42PFL9803. This ought to reduce local dimming's issues with lost

shadow detail and 'haloing' around bright objects.

The potentially much more precise LED lighting has been partnered with a new panel design, resulting in Philips' ground-breaking claimed contrast ratio of 5,000,000:1. Of course, anyone who believes such a figure probably also reckons the moon is made of cheese and the Earth is flat, but our Tech Lab's measurements of a 343,000:1 contrast ratio in Vivid mode, and 224,000:1 in Standard, are very impressive.

The other big attractions of the 46PFL9704 are its built-in internet access, and a potent brew of video processing that chiefly comprises Philips' über-powerful Perfect Pixel HD system and a 200Hz engine (actually a combination of 100Hz with a scanning backlight).

In the current market, Philips' net functions are the most advanced, particularly the inclusion of an Opera web browser, meaning you are unrestricted in the web content you can call up on your bigscreen.

**Going through everything Perfect Pixel HD does would take far too much space**, so suffice it to say that

although you need to take care with some settings (more on this later), when the Perfect Pixel-driven images are at their best they are arguably the finest I've seen from an LCD TV.

## Suck it and see

Such hyperbole will doubtless have our more cynical readers headed straight for their nearest AV Moaner forum. But it's hard to imagine anyone watching a well-calibrated 46PFL9704 disagreeing with me.

The single most devastating element of the 46PFL9704's pictures

## → Specifications

HD Ready: YES Full HD, 1080p24 Tuner: YES Freeview

Component video: YES 1 input HDMI: YES 5 inputs

PC input: YES D-sub 15 pin

Resolution: 1920 x 1080 Audio: 2 x 15W

Brightness (claimed): 500 cd/m<sup>2</sup>

Contrast ratio (claimed): 5,000,000:1

Dimensions (w/o stand): 987(w) x 630(h) x 89(d)mm

Weight (w/o stand): 19.8kg

Features: 200Hz processing; Perfect Pixel HD processing; MPEG noise reduction; HD Natural Motion processing; Perfect Colour (producing 2250 trillion claimed colours); USB input with JPEG, MP3, and multiple video format compatibility; DLNA PC streaming wirelessly or via Ethernet; wireless or wired internet connectivity





**Premium screen:**  
The 46PFL9704 is Philips' flagship telly – and deservedly so

is their black level response, in terms of both the depth of grey-free black reached while showing the spacescapes of the latest *Star Trek* opus on Blu-ray, and the amount of shadow detail reproduced with dark interior shots. This latter achievement is particularly startling, since the loss of shadow detail is usually considered one of the weaknesses of direct LED technology.

The Philips' viewing angle is good, too, so the black level response hardly reduces at all if you have to watch the TV from an angle.

Making the 46PFL9704's black level prowess all the more dramatic is the extreme brightness and vibrancy of the rest of its pictures. **Here again you can clearly appreciate the worth of LED local dimming**, as the image scarcely needs to dim its overall brightness at all to keep black levels looking excellent, even when an image contains a stark mixture of brights and darks.

Colours are exceptionally rich, yet they're painted with excellent subtlety, range and blend finesse, meaning that the 46PFL9704 is as at home with *EastEnders* as it is with *The Incredibles*.

Next there's Perfect Pixel HD's effective touch with sharpness. As well as producing extremely precise clarity and detailing with HD, the 46PFL9704 makes standard-definition pictures look sharper and more 'HD' than possibly any other brand can manage. This extra detail is accompanied, too, by nowhere near as much noise as I've seen on other manufacturer's engines.

On the downside, the HD Natural Motion system can still generate some low-level artefacts, like shimmering around the edges of moving objects, even if you use it on its lowest setting. But these artefacts are less distracting than ever before, leaving the benefits of the processing standing prouder. Plus, of course, you can turn the system off entirely – though inevitably this will lead to a marginal increase in motion blur.

Other negatives include problems with the advanced sharpness tools. They're poorly thought out and can make pictures look ridiculously noisy. Also, none of the presets get close to 6,500K. Finally, there is a trace of haloing around very bright objects. But you only really notice this if you're sat stupidly close to the screen.

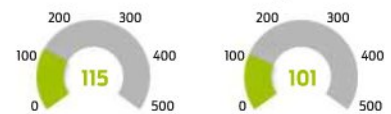
It's back to good news with the 46PFL9704's audio performance. The TV uses the tried-and-tested Philips system of two dome tweeters in the front and two mid-bass drivers mounted in large volume speaker boxes on the rear. The result is powerful, dynamic and clear.

### King of the castle

Yes, the 46PFL9704 is expensive. Yes, the 46PFL9704 is demanding. But provided you show it the care and attention it deserves, the 46PFL9704 is also nothing short of outstanding. Of course, 2010 looks like being the Year of LED TV, with ever more feature-packed and slickly-designed models set to launch in the coming months, but I can easily recommend this current Philips TV to anyone after a high-end bigscreen.

### → Tech Labs

#### Power consumption: Watts



**White screen:**  
LED backlighting delivers low power consumption with our white 100IRE screen; it increased to 201W in Vivid mode, though

**Test footage:**  
A lower Wattage than with 100IRE white even with the speakers at full volume. Light Sensor mode cuts this figure to 86W.

#### Contrast: ratio



**Picture:** Excellent contrast performance, though nowhere near the outrageous claims, and a relatively high luminance of 89.42fl in Standard mode

#### Colour temp: Kelvin



**Presets:**  
The Warm CT preset gets the closest to 6,500K but not that close. Custom mode offers full R/G/B level adjustment for perfect results  
**Normal:** 11,772K  
**Warm:** 7,461K  
**Cool:** 14,672K



### HCC VERDICT

Philips 46PFL9704H  
£2,500 Approx

**Highs:** Beautiful design; outstanding audio; arguably the best LCD picture ever; excellent 'net connectivity  
**Lows:** Quality doesn't come cheap; colour presets aren't great

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5



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# Packed with power

**Adam Rayner** marvels yet again at Bowers & Wilkins' ability to fill classic-looking cabinets with 21st-century tech

**I**t's very smelly in the Nautilus room at the Bowers & Wilkins factory – there are no leaky aircon pipes to connect it to the outside world and it's lined with stinky rubbery stuff. But it's where B&W locks golden-eared engineers inside for short periods (very health and safety conscious, you see) to tweak and tune the Nautilus' individually-assembled crossovers. Even 'un-tuned', as I once heard these iconic speakers, gleaming dully in their rubbery gloom, they are ruddy awesome.

Of course, for people who cannot afford a 9.1 system of those £55,000-a-pair speakers, it's nice to know that a slice of the clever Nautilus tech has filtered down B&W's range until it can be used in less esoteric products.

That's what you have here. Using metal dome tweeters with Nautilus tapering tubes hidden behind them, these CM speakers are aimed above B&W's 600 series and all its 'lifestyle' products, and meant for the discerning cinema freak who wants a slice of B&W quality, but can't afford vapour-deposited Diamond domes and massive bent-wood enclosures that you need two men to heft!

## Classical cabinets

The seven-speaker-strong CM series is also available in glossy black, but I thought these looked good and classic in their handsome rose nutty finish. Add in the square-font branding and they look like they could have been assembled any time since the 1950s.

That's until you examine a grille and it pops off in your hand on 21st-century Neodymium magnet grippers. There are corresponding steel bits embedded beneath the surface of the enclosures, and these

**Quality control:**  
The build of the CM series is hard to fault





## AV/CV

**Product:**  
A taste of high-end B&W tech, like Nautilus-derived tweeters and Kevlar cones, in a classic traditional look

**Position:**  
B&W's mid-range – above its lifestyle products and 600 series

**Peers:**  
PMC DB1i 5.1;  
Dali Mentor 5.1;  
Dynaudio Excite AV

tiny magnets are now small and powerful enough to work through posh cabinets to hold speaker grilles in place. It all adds a touch of class to proceedings, and as a direct result, the CMs look gorgeous grille-free, because there are no holes ready for the mounts. I, for one, am not mourning mass-market Eelon clips or those even uglier non-precision rubbery grommets used on budget gear.

With grilles removed you can feast your eyes on the driver lineup – the aforementioned aluminium dome tweeter, the creamy fixed-suspension mid-range driver, and the twin 6.5in paper/Kevlar bass cones below. Then its round the back for a shufti at the dual binding posts on each enclosure.

This includes the ASW10CM subwoofer, which has the increasingly wise provision of independent input on both speaker and LFE feed lines, simultaneously. **A lot of low-frequency information never makes it to the subwoofer channel**, as pro-cinema systems have huge bass drivers all round – unless it's 'Low Frequency Effects' you often miss it due to your satellite speakers' low-end cut off.

I had this explained to me very succinctly by Richard Lord, founder of bass behemoth REL Acoustics, and it really does make a huge difference. Since then I have seen this feature appear on a few other subs from different brands. It's annoying if there's no independent control (as with the Tannoy TS1201, reviewed on page 66); good, then, that the B&W ASW10CM subwoofer has a knob for gain control of each. You really can

use this feature as a mark of engineering cunning and low-end tonal knowledge in subwoofers. I should warn you that it'll eliminate a lot of them off your shortlist, though.

### Starter's orders

I set the CM9 towers on their big slabby plinths and chose the round plastic feet, rather than spikes, from what I reckon is the best accessory pack in the biz – a card with blister-packed quad-sets of feet and spikes, where everyone else seems to opt for little bags with all the fittings rubbing around inside. With the subwoofer plugged in and ▶







#### Inner strength:

Within the cabinets, B&W's Nautilus tube-loading technology is hard at work

the CM Centre 2 and CM5 surrounds in place it was time to go. After all, it's the sound of this luxuriously styled and crafted array that's the real treat.

The subwoofer was ludicrously easy to make sound great. A quick play with each of the two gains and a wibble of the crossover – I like it a little below the 80Hz point due to my room's eigentones – and it was singing *en masse*.

In fact, I was blown away by the ASW10CM subwoofer. It's a 10in, 500W design (a 12in model may appear in the future, too) and the bass it produces has that ineffable grip – tight and not at all woolly. Although not to the same scale as the brand's own ASW825 or my own REL Stentor II, it was quite ridiculously fast and satisfying.

Indeed, I would say that the superior speed and front-edge attack this whole system is capable of is far

above most for the money involved, something I discovered via the demo-worthy opening sequence of *Iron Man* (Blu-ray). This really has it all: loud rock music that goes from 'background' to 'feature' as the viewer is transported into a HumVee where a small portable is blasting the same tune; a wide soundscape within the vehicle as Stark (Robert Downey Jnr) waxes lyrical; and then the inevitable hell breaking loose, with the coherent wavefront of that first explosion, the savage edge of the mid-distance gunfire that occurs back left, and the RPG that whooshes from rear-left to rear-right behind you. Not to mention every one of the really big blow-you-off-your-feet explosions. **The CM series delivered the whole shebang with believable scale and depth.** While I was watching the screen, rapt as ever, an audiophile friend was watching my double-glazed double doors bulge. These speakers mean business.

#### Where is thy Sting?

But while scale and might are great fun they have little to do with the overall emotional impact. Time, then for the test CD, a 5.1 DTS Sting title, rotting in a 20-year-old Denon CD player. I leave it in there for simple 'on/off, is it working?' checks, but this time I sat and listened to whole tracks again, revelling in the delicious twangy guitars of *Love is Stronger than Justice* and the lack of any sibilance on the vocals, despite the B&W's metal domes. This system is both sweet and impactful.

Placement was pin-sharp, and we were right in Sting's megalomaniacal musical grasp, as all sorts occurred around us in the soundfield. My mate hated it – he's a real stereophile – but I was amazed by the bizarre levels of value for money the CMs represent.

These cabinets are the flappy-paddle gearboxes of the speaker world – mid-price yet with Formula One technology! ●



#### → Specifications

##### CM9 floorstanders

**Drive Units:** 1 x 1in Nautilus tube-loaded aluminium dome tweeter; 1 x 6in woven Kevlar fibre cone FST midrange driver; 2 x 6.5in paper/Kevlar bass units  
**Enclosure:** Three-way rear ported by B&W Flowport with dual cylindrical foam port-blocker system  
**Frequency Response:** 56Hz-22kHz  
**Sensitivity:** 89dB  
**Power Handling:** 30-200W  
**Dimensions:** 200(w) x 1,025(h) x 321(d)mm  
**Weight:** 26.6kg

##### CM Centre 2

**Drive Units:** 1 x 1in Nautilus tube-loaded aluminium dome tweeter; 1 x 4in woven Kevlar fibre cone FST midrange driver; 2 x 6.5in paper/Kevlar bass units  
**Enclosure:** Three-way rear ported by B&W Flowport with dual cylindrical foam port-blocker system  
**Frequency Response:** 56Hz-22kHz  
**Sensitivity:** 89dB  
**Power Handling:** 30-200W  
**Dimensions:** 590(w) x 218(h) x 301(d)mm  
**Weight:** 18.7kg

##### CM5 surrounds

**Drive Units:** 1 x 1in Nautilus tube-loaded aluminium dome tweeter; 1 x 6in woven Kevlar fibre cone FST midrange driver  
**Enclosure:** Two-way ported by B&W Flowport  
**Frequency Response:** 52Hz-22kHz  
**Sensitivity:** 88dB  
**Power Handling:** 30-120W  
**Dimensions:** 200(w) x 340(h) x 301(d)mm  
**Weight:** 8.9kg

##### ASW10CM subwoofer

**Drive Units:** 1 x 10in long-throw paper/Kevlar cone with 'Mushroom' constructional stiffening  
**Enclosure:** Sealed  
**Frequency Response:** 25Hz-40Hz/140Hz by crossover setting  
**On board power:** 500W RMS Class D with switch mode power supply  
**Dimensions:** 325(w) x 325(h) x 362(d)mm  
**Weight:** 19.2kg  
**Connections:** Phono input in stereo and dual sets of bi-wireable binding posts, with independent gain controls

#### HCC VERDICT

Bowers & Wilkins CM Series  
£4,250 Approx

**Highs:** True sweet highs; fabulous imagery and ridiculously good bass from a 10in woofer

**Lows:** Square boxes look a bit ordinary versus top-end; grille magnets are a bit weak

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5



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\*\*TrustedReviews.com, 09/2009: Overall: 9/10

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# Teufel



# Built for sound

**Danny Philips** likes what he sees and hears, but wonders whether this thoroughbred Blu-ray deck does enough to justify its premium billing

Some Blu-ray players, like LG's brilliant BD390, seek to dazzle and delight us with showpiece features like built-in Wi-Fi and network streaming, but others would rather let their performance do the talking. This second-generation deck from Marantz adheres to the latter school of thought, throwing its heart and soul into what made us fall in love with Blu-ray in the first place – namely crisp high-def pictures and scintillating hi-res sound.

But at £700 – almost three times as expensive as the LG – that performance needs to be pretty damn spectacular to make you resist the considerable pulling power of the Koreans' top-selling opus.

Of course, the other thing that sets the Marantz apart from its budget brethren is build quality.

It oozes class, right from the thick, curved aluminium fascia to the gold-plated socketry.

But it's also the little touches that impress – the disc tray glides out with well-oiled smoothness, and the embossed silver plaques on the front had me fawning over it like a teenage girl at a *Twilight* premiere.

## Plenty round the back

The rear panel is well-stocked. You get the obligatory HDMI output, capable of firing audio bitstreams to a compatible amp, as well as 1080p24 pictures. Component and composite video ports complete the video line-up, while owners of older amps will appreciate the 7.1-channel analogue outputs, which allow you to taste Dolby True HD and DTS-HD mixes thanks to the built-in decoders.

## AV/CV

**Product:**  
Profile 2.0  
Blu-ray player  
with DivX HD  
playback

**Positioning:**  
Step up model  
from BD5004

**Peers:**  
LG BD390;  
Pioneer  
DDP-LX52;  
Panasonic  
DMP-BD80

My earlier talk of Marantz putting performance first doesn't mean the BD7004 is a complete slouch in the features department. Sure, there's no built-in Wi-Fi, network streaming or YouTube tomfoolery, but it does playback a decent array of digital media formats from the front-mounted SD card slot, including AVCHD camcorder footage and DivX HD files from recordable Blu-ray, DVD and CDs, widening the deck's hi-def potential.

The SD card slot isn't used purely for media playback – the lack of built-in memory means you'll need it to store BD-Live downloads. That's poor for a deck this pricey, but at least you haven't got a USB stick poking out the front.

After delving into the BD7004's main menu, I found myself in familiar

## → Specifications

**Upscaling:** YES Up to 1080p  
**Multiregion:** NO Region B Blu-ray and R2 DVD  
**HDMI:** YES 1 x v1.3  
**Component:** YES 1 output  
**Multichannel analogue:** YES 7.1 outputs  
**Digital audio:** YES coaxial  
**SACD/DVD-A:** NO/NO but you shouldn't expect it at this price  
**Dolby True HD/DTS HD decoding:** YES/YES  
**Dolby True HD / DTS HD bitstream:** YES/YES  
**Profile 2.0:** YES, with full BD-Live compatibility  
**Dimensions:** 440(w) x 105(h) x 324(d)mm  
**Weight:** 4.9kg  
**Also featuring:** SD card slot; Ethernet port; MP3, WMA, JPEG, DivX HD, AVCHD playback; Pure Direct mode; Anchor Bay ABT1030 chip with VRS processing; 297MHz/12bit video DAC





territory. Aside from the Marantz splashscreen, the GUI design is identical to that of the Denon DVD-1800BD and DVD-3800BD (hardly surprising given that Marantz and Denon are owned by the same parent company), with its separate Quick and Custom sub-menus and a remote control graphic down the side. It's responsive and easy to navigate.

Less forgivable is the laborious disc-loading speed. Recent players, including the aforementioned LG and load Blu-ray almost as quickly as DVD, but the BD7004 is way down the evolutionary scale.

## Positively charmed

Once up and running, I was soon charmed by the Marantz's impressive picture quality. The rich tapestry of grubby detail in the gloomy London of 2027 makes *Children of Men* a killer test disc, and the Marantz revels in the challenge, retrieving and displaying every last pixel in the cleanest, starkest way.

**I was staggered by the amount of clear, visible shadow detail** during Clive Owen's escape from the farm, not least because the whole scene is shrouded in pre-dawn darkness. Colours are believable and nuanced throughout, but when called for it delivers stunningly bright shades – my expression of goggle-eyed, slack-jawed wonder during a spin of

*Monsters Vs Aliens* is testament to their intoxicating power.

Similarly, the Silicon Optix HQV Blu-ray disc scrubs up nicely, with the Marantz blitzing everything except the Film Resolution Loss test pattern, which suffers from some awkward strobing and flickering. Upscaled DVD performance, courtesy of Anchor Bay's VRS processing, is superb.

So a clean bill of health, but is the BD7004's picture performance much better than its lower-priced rivals? I'm afraid the answer is no – I can't see the Marantz doing anything different to 1080p24 pictures than the Sony's BDP-S760, for instance.

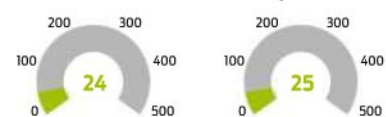
Perhaps the higher price point is justified by the deck's audio performance, particularly music playback with the Pure Direct mode engaged. Most budget BD-spinners make passable CD players at best, but there's an extra touch of refinement at play here, evident in the clean, smooth treble and full-bodied mids. It's backed up by similarly impressive HD audio decoding, which relays busy action scenes with stunning zest and cohesion.

But as much as I love the BD7004's audio and one or two other features, I just can't see any reason to buy it over the LG BD390, Panasonic DMP-BD80 or the latest Pioneer and Sony decks – apart, perhaps, from the design and build quality, which is undeniably alluring

**Two choices:** The BD7004 is also available in a silver finish, should you be bored of black

## → Tech Labs

### Power consumption: Watts



**Idling:** Switched on, the Marantz uses a reasonably high amount of power

**Playing:** The figure barely changes when spinning a disc, though

### Audio Jitter: Ps



**Analogue:** This audio jitter measurement is a very good result, well up to audiophile standards

### Loading: Boot/Java

**Boot speed & tray eject**

**20s**

**Tray in to main BD menu**

**80s**

### Disc loading & Java:

The BD7004 isn't the slowest deck we've tested, but it's not a sprinter, either



## HCC VERDICT

Marantz BD7004  
£700 Approx

**Highs:** Build quality and looks; DivX HD support; sound quality; DVD upscaling

**Lows:** Slow disc loading; no built-in memory; BD performance not much better than cheaper rivals

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5



### → Specifications

HD Ready: YES Full HD, 1080p24

Tuner: YES Freeview, Freesat HD, analogue

Component video: YES one input

HDMI: YES 4 x v1.3 HDMI's

PC input: YES D-sub 15 pin

Resolution: 1920 x 1080

Brightness (claimed): n/a

Contrast ratio (claimed): 2,000,000:1

Dimensions (w/o stand): 1,422(w) x

880(h) x 93(d)mm

Weight (w/o stand): 53kg

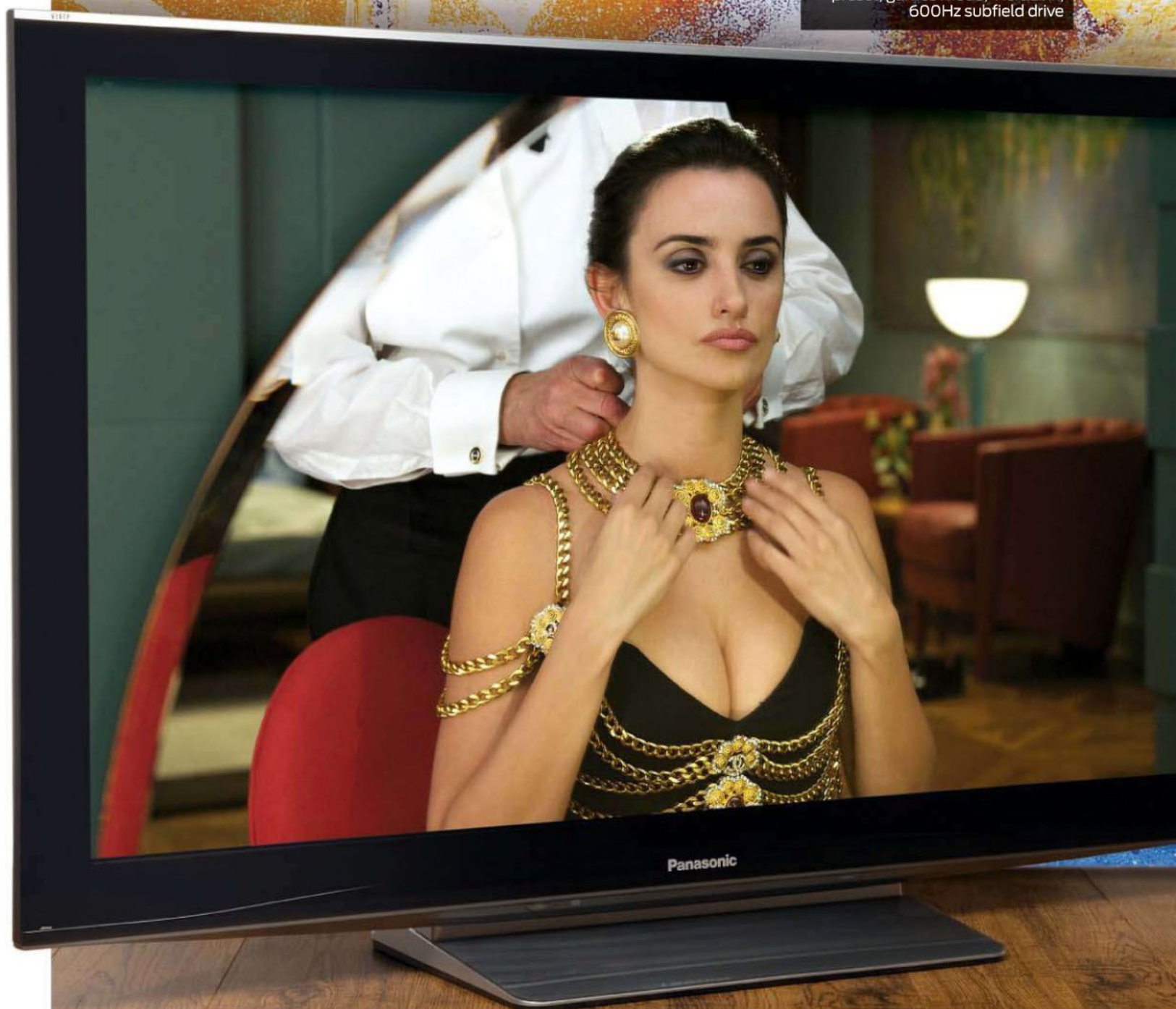
Features: MPEG NR; NeoPDP panel;

VieraCast online support; media

playback via USB; THX picture

preset; games mode; VieraLink;

600Hz subfield drive



This 58in screen is one of the biggest TVs currently available



# High-end TV titan

**John Archer** finds room in his setup for a 58in plasma from Panasonic



Panasonic's TX-P58V10 isn't the sort of screen you can tuck into the corner of your living room – at 58in, it'll dominate any space it's in. That's no bad thing, though: this monstrous plasma TV is good enough to be the centre-piece of any high-end home entertainment setup.

A NeoPDP model with a 2,000,000:1 contrast claim and online functionality, the P58V10 is one of Panasonic's flagship tellies, something that explains its £3,400 price tag.

Its connections will keep most happy, with four HDMI inputs, an SD card slot able to play AVCHD and DivX video files and display JPEGs, plus an Ethernet port among the highlights. The latter let's you access VieraCast, Panasonic's content-controlled slice of internet, plus BBC's iPlayer, when it rolls out to the Freesat platform.

## Very refreshing

Along with its sheer size, the P58V10 justifies its price with its picture processing. For example, it boasts a 600Hz system, where frame interpolation processing inserts enough extra 'sub-field' frames to let Panasonic claim a 600Hz effect without actually refreshing 600 times a second. It also packs the Pro 4 version of Panasonic's V-Real video processing engine, and Digital Cinema Colour, which can produce colours similar to those found in new commercial digital cinemas.

While the P58V10 setup isn't as flexible as I hoped (it lacks manual RGB adjustment), it does have a calibrated and approved THX picture preset, which our Tech Labs measured at 6,584K. And using the TV is generally an exercise in simplicity, with a clear but effective remote control.

It's at its stunning best playing Blu-ray movies, HDTV sources and HD games. With these, it produces one of the most flat-out cinematic pictures we've seen. Dark scenes are joyous to see compared with most flat TVs, delivering deep, natural, detailed black levels in a way few other screens can.

Even more striking is colour response. Along with the vibrancy noted with most other NeoPDP designs, the P58V10 also avoids the orange-tinged reds and green undertones to many dark scenes I saw on other Panasonic plasmas in 2009. This is even more noticeable when you use the set's Digital Cinema Colour option, which also boosts the colour palette.

Further helping its movie screen credentials is its knack of reproducing detail in HD sources – including the channels from the Freesat HD tuner.

**Picture clarity owes a debt of gratitude to the '600Hz' engine**, as the image suffers markedly less judder and edge flickering than with Panasonic's non-600Hz plasmas.

While HD pictures are imperious, though, they're not perfect, owing to the occasional forced colour and presence of a low-level processing artefact, which occurs if you're using the TV's frame creation system.

Oddly, the picture suffers from a few more rogue colours when you switch to standard-def material. But you can make improvements here by toning down the colour settings, and otherwise its Freeview and SD Freesat pictures hold up well considering the size of the display.

Add in the P58V10's excellent audio, and you get a bigscreen gem that should be on every well-heeled AV fan's audition list. Just make sure you have the space for it... ●

## AV/CV

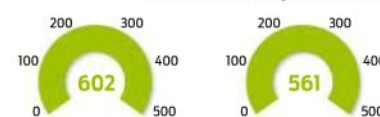
**Product:**  
58in Freesat HD NeoPDP plasma

**Position:**  
Its £3.4K price tag alone places this giant Full HD screen near Panny's top-end

**Peers:**  
Panasonic TX-P54Z1;  
Samsung UE55B7020

## Tech Labs

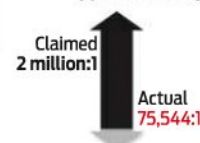
**Power consumption:** Watts



**White screen:**  
Predictably high consumption from a 58in plasma model, but Eco mode cuts it to 456W

**Test footage:**  
With our test disc and full sound, power consumption drops to 561W

**Contrast:** ratio



**Picture:** Though short of the claimed figure, the Dynamic contrast ratio is indeed stunning, and in Normal mode it's a still impressive 72,653:1 with luminance of 21.2fl

**Colour temp:** Kelvin



**Presets:**  
A small range of CT presets, and no manual adjustments, but the THX mode is a close approximation to 6,500K.  
Cool: 9,123K  
Normal: 6,821K  
Warm: 6,695K  
THX: 6,584K

## HCC VERDICT

Panasonic TX-P58V10  
£3,400 Approx

**Highs:** Cinematic HD pictures; integrated Freesat HD tuner; excellent audio

**Lows:** SD pictures lack some colour stability; some processing artefacts

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5



# Tannoy ups its game

This 12in subwoofer fills a gap in the brand's lineup, says **Adam Rayner**



## → Specifications

**Drive Unit:** 12in long-throw design  
– warranty covered for five years!  
**Enclosure:** Sealed, forward-firing, fixed grille  
**Frequency Response:** Down to 21Hz  
**On-Board Power:** 500W  
**Dimensions:** 365(w) x 365(h) x 355(d)mm  
**Weight:** 16.7kg  
**Connections:** Phono stereo in and high-level speaker inputs via high-quality binding posts; infra-red remote control port built-in but you need a universal remote as none is supplied

Tannoy is a legend in many markets. We still hear the expression 'Tannoy System' for when people are referring to say, announcement systems at shopping malls, and it is also revered for its recording studio monitors, having made ones big enough for me to live in! Lately it has been getting right on the home cinema case with both superb HCC-award-winning high-end sets and entry-level square-corner speakers for folks on a budget.

But bass? Well a huge studio monitor rumbles, but **subwoofers are a specialist side to the speaker-maker's art** and Tannoy has previously left me wanting. Its new three-strong TS series woofers do look like the part, though, and I reckon they provide deeply superior performance to what's been offered in the past.

I auditioned the biggest model, the 12in TS1201, as my viewing room isn't small. There's a 500W amp in its guts and it looks a bit like a retro 1970s coffee table in its dark brown finish. Which is fine with me.

Around the back are sockets to stick a set of speaker wires and a stereo phono pair. Although you

cannot use both under independent control as with some better subs, Tannoy has taken the dual importance of line and speaker level on board. Enormous amounts of bass information are regularly left out of the LFE channel whilst solidly present in the L and R and the TS range truly benefits from its ability to connect both simultaneously.

I used *Coraline* on Blu-ray as a test disc – there's a wonderful bit right at the beginning of the DTS-HD MA soundtrack as the arrival of a main character is presaged with a thunderstorm. The bass from the TS is just a size or two bigger than you'd would expect from a small box. I found control and weight to be a class above the brand's last offerings and the sheer grunt makes it obvious that the money has gone to the right department. This is a really strong box and a really beefy driver with a good magnet and suspension. I am such a saddy I would have liked to have been able to take the grille off just to see the driver in action, but it isn't meant for removal.

All in all, the TS1201 is a smart and potent woofer, more than worthy to wear such a prestigious name.

## AV/CV

**Product:**  
Compact yet classy-looking 500W subwoofer

**Position:**  
Biggest of the TS series and vanguard of the new, deeper, better Tannoy subwoofers

**Peers:**  
ATC CI-Sub;  
MJ Acoustics Ref 150 MkII;  
Monitor Audio RSW12



## HCC VERDICT

Tannoy TS1201  
£600 Approx

**Highs:** Smart looks; easy of use; real grunt, weight, presence and control  
**Lows:** You have to pay more for a remote control

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5



**Panasonic**

**Pioneer**

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# When two become one

Alone they're impressive – together: unbeatable.

**Richard Stevenson** waxes lyrical over two great parts that make an even better whole

In a fantasy world where money isn't an object and the wife is a dead ringer for Keira Knightley, I suspect the typical *HCC* reader might desire a small but wholly state-of-the-art commercial cinema. Back in the real world, budgeting close to £5,000 for AV disc-player and multichannel amplifier for your own home is still a huge ask. What you want is over 95 per cent of the performance of ultimate high-end kit and still have space on the plastic for half a dozen Blu-rays and a bag of buttery popcorn.

## Dream come true

In fact, if you were to dream up a performance wish-list for said £5K outlay, it might look a bit like this: razor-sharp picture performance with a black level so inky you could bottle it and sell it to Bic; warm vibrant colours, with excellent flesh tones and flawless gradation; shadow detailing only a smidgeon worse than Denon's DVD-A1UD or Pioneer's BDP-LX91; super-smooth motion-scrolling; and a huge, solid and dynamically-charged soundstage that one could measure in acres.

Perhaps there wouldn't be a full THX spec with post processing, nor the finite detailing of a high-end processor, nor the sumptuous ease of a monster power amp, but it would be oh-so-close. With each movie you'd get a shiver of goose bumps in anticipation of the main event, the operation would be seamless (eventually, when you got used to it) and the build quality would feel as well screwed together as a German car. And that neatly sums up Denon's AVR-4810

### AV/CV

**Products:**  
Universal disc spinner and fully-featured 9.1-channel AVR

**Position:**  
Denon's flagship amp married to its second-best BD-spinner

**Peers:**  
Pioneer BDP-LX91 & SC-LX82; Sony BDP-S5000ES & STR-DA6400ES

receiver and BDP-4010UD universal player partnership.

**You simply can't fault this pairing for the money. They rock.** As a

combination they play just about everything very well; look and sound great, and are packed to the rafters with features. Okay, you don't get the über-high-end power supplies, triple laminate chassis and speaker terminals you could anchor a small ship to – like Denon's awesome A1HD products. That said, the performance, features and operation come so near, it hurts.

The 4810 receiver is unique in being the first to market with Dolby Pro-Logic IIz, Audyssey DSX, nine channels of amplification and the ability to run a full DSX 11.1 set-up if you add a separate stereo amp. There are even three separate sub outputs for 11.3 if you are mad enough...

If there is any chance you can fit height and width speakers in your living room without wrecking the decor or inciting divorce proceedings, then this is the amp for you.

The receiver's features count is absolutely splendid, including all the usual decoding formats, a serious 140W-per-channel (claimed) and a new 32bit DSP chipset. You get six HDMI inputs including one on the front, plus USBs, Ethernet and integrated Wi-Fi – which connected and updated the firmware seamlessly, as well as linking direct to Napster. There's a plethora of install







## → Specifications

**BDP-4010UD**  
**Video upscaling:** yes to 1080p  
**Multiregion:** no Region B  
**Blu-ray:** R2 DVD  
**HDMI:** yes v1.3  
**Component:** yes  
**Multichannel output:** yes 7.1 analogue  
**Digital audio:** yes coaxial and optical  
**SACD/DVD-A:** yes/yes  
**Dolby True HD/DTS-HD decoding:** yes/yes  
**Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD bitstream:** yes/yes  
**Profile 2.0:** yes, via Ethernet  
**Dimensions:** 434(w) x 137(h) x 383(d)mm  
**Weight:** 10kg  
**Features:** AVCHD playback; DivX compatible; DenonLink 4th Edition; SDHC card reader; JPEG, AVI; WMA & MP3 playback

**AVR-4810**  
**Dolby True HD:** yes and Dolby Pro-Logic IIz  
**DTS HD Master Audio:** yes and DTS ES 6.1 Discrete  
**THX:** no  
**Multichannel audio:** yes 9 x 140W  
**Multichannel input:** yes 7.1 phono  
**Multiroom:** yes main plus 3 zones (one optical)  
**AV inputs:** yes 7 x S-video & phono audio, 6 x digital audio (3 x coaxial, 3 x optical)  
**HDMI input/output:** yes 6-in, 2-out  
**Video upscaling:** yes to 1080p  
**Component:** yes 3-in, 1-out  
**Dimensions:** 434(w) x 424(h) x 195(d)mm  
**Weight:** 19.1kg  
**Features:** Audyssey DSX with 11-channel output; Anchor Bay video processing; vTuner access; Napster access; Audyssey Dynamic EQ/Volume; Triple subwoofer pre-outs; bi-amping capability; DL4; Compressed Audio Restorer; 32bit DSP; integrated Wi-Fi; iPod dock via USB; Ethernet; 2 x USB readers; Audyssey MultiEQ; FM/AM tuner and vTuner and Napster



Looking for a £5K AV setup? Look no further



## 70 REVIEWS

features, including remote extenders, IR repeaters and 12V triggers as well as main-plus-two-zone multiroom and, uniquely, an optical output for Zone 4. Surreal.

### Universal hero

The BDP-4010UD is no less special in that it is a true universal player handling Blu-rays, DVDs, CDs, SACDs, DVD-As, DivX and a variety of compressed audio formats on CDRs. I bought into SACD and DVD-A in the vain hope that the mass-market would get excited by high-res audio, and the BDP-4010 does them significant hi-fidelity justice. Of course, it has 1080p video scaling by Anchor Bay, Ethernet connectivity, Denon's proprietary AL24 processing and an SD card reader/writer to boot. The menu is huge and complex, no feature is left wanting and its architecture is fully upgradeable over the 'net.

While both products would comfortably scoop rave reviews in their own right, it is the sum of the parts that makes this assembled combination very special. Both are equipped with DenonLink 4th Edition, which allows the intricate high-speed digital clocks of each component to synchronise to pico-second accuracy via a jitter-reducing circuit in the receiver. Simply put, connect player to receiver with an HDMI cable and a Cat5 or Cat6 lead and digital jitter in the HDMI audio transfer is eliminated. The result is a crisper, more accurate sound with oodles of space and detail in the effects and dialogue.

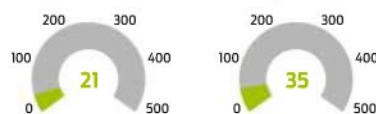
The opening sequence of *Star Trek* (the new *de facto* review Blu-ray, I think) is gorgeously rendered with a tangible quality that wholly disguises the CG effects and generates a huge 3D star field in front of your eyes. The black levels lend real credence to the depths of space, in stark contrast to the bright lighting inside the ship. **The edge definition and fine detail is tremendous and fast-panning scenes move like they're on well-oiled rails.** The out-of-the-box picture errs on the rich side and atmospheric rather than eye-searingly vivacious, so unless your Blu-ray collection looks like an A-Z library of Pixar and Disney, you won't need to touch a single picture control.

The picture is accompanied by a sumptuously large soundstage, rich with big-scale effects and bass to loosen your fillings. The deep throb

## → Tech Labs

### BDP-4010UD

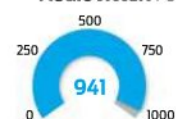
#### Power consumption: Watts



**Idling:** Consumption is pretty high compared to the average BD player, but perhaps not for this monster

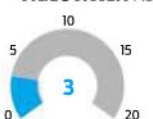
**Powered:** There's a surprising increase in consumption during playback

#### Audio Jitter: Ps



**Sound:** A not outstanding analogue audio jitter measurement, but reasonable

#### Video Jitter: Ns



**Vision:** Three nanoseconds of video jitter is an excellent result, suggesting high video output quality

#### Loading: Boot/Java

Boot speed & tray eject

50s

Tray in to main BD menu

107s

#### Video S/N: dB

|                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| Denon BDP-4010UD | -72   |
| Pioneer BDP-LX52 | -72.2 |
| Denon DVD-AUD1   | -65.8 |
| Yamaha BD-S1900  | -66.3 |

**Disc loading & Java:** Denon's BDP-4010UD was agonisingly slow to load our test BD

**Response tests:** Excellent video signal-to-noise figures suggest top-class picture quality

of the ship engines is barely audible on most systems (and certainly not if you are only using a TV's speakers) but through the Denon pair you get a pervasive drone of the engines that puts you right there in the scene. Dialogue is crisp and articulate, although it was a little recessed without the Room EQ engaged. Switch to Audyssey Flat mode and it punches up the body and weight to male voices perfectly.

### Ahead of the curve

And let's not forget that this pair does SACD and DVD-A playback with equal dexterity. You might not have bought in to either format, but the attention to detail and audio-quality engineering pay big dividends with basic CDs. Add to this Denon's compressed audio restorer for MP3s, and internet radio, and you have an accomplished all-round system that will keep ahead of the technology curve for quite a few years. No, it isn't quite as good as Denon's flagship AIHD system, but it's 95 per cent there and available for around one third of the price. It sounds like a gold-plated bargain to me.

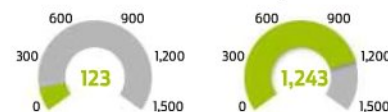




→ Tech Labs

AVR-4810

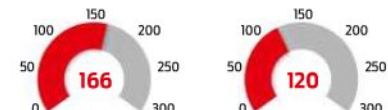
Power consumption: Watts



**Idling:**  
Moderate consumption in idling mode considering this amp's power

**Powered:** Rated at 9 x 140W at 8Ω, so five-channel mode power consumption is unsurprisingly high

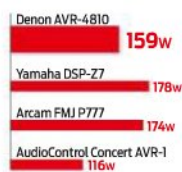
Power ratings: Watts (8Ω, 0.5% THD)



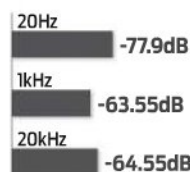
**2-channel 8Ω:**  
The Denon's stereo power rating of 166W is superb

**5-channel 8Ω:**  
The AVR-4810 measured a little under spec, but still remarkably good

Untainted: Watts



Signal/noise: dB



**Fidelity firewall:**  
An excellent firewall spec suggests distortion-free performance up to very high volumes

**S/N tests:**  
Excellent ratings at lower frequencies giving way to very good at mid and high



HCC VERDICT

Denon BDP-4010UD/AVR-4810  
£4,700 Approx

**Highs:** Big sound and intense life-like picture; great upscaling solid build; 11-channel output!

**Lows:** Complex to set-up

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5



### → Specifications

Video upscaling: YES up to 1080p  
Multiregion: NO Region B (BD); R2 (DVD)  
HDMI: YES 1x v1.3 output  
Component: YES up to 1080i  
Multichannel phono audio: NO stereo inputs only  
Digital audio: YES 2 x optical inputs  
SACD/DVD-A: NO/NO Don't be daft  
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD: YES/YES  
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD bitstream: YES/YES  
Profile 2.0: YES BD-Live requires USB stick  
Dimensions (system unit): 440(w)x 63(h) x345(d)mm  
Weight (system unit): 4.4kg  
Also featuring: 1080p24 mode; AM/FM radio with RDS; iPod dock supplied; 165W to each satellite speaker (170W to centre) and 170W to the passive subwoofer; zoom and PIP; mp3/JPEG/mkv/mp4/DivX/XviD playback via disc, network or USB ports; YouTube playback; Anynet+ (HDMI CEC); Pro-Logic, Pro-Logic II music/movies, matrix and four SFE DSP modes; touch-sensitive front-panel controls; wireless surround-speaker and Wi-Fi upgradeable

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For some, an all-in-one Blu-ray system is the ideal upgrade



# System simplicity

**Martin Pipe** thinks Samsung's 5.1 BD system has everything you need

Modern trends in home cinema systems may favour 'virtual speakers' and the elimination of boxes, but what you gain in domestic acceptability is lost in performance terms. Yes, a 2.1 virtual surround system is undoubtedly better than nothing, but if you can run a full 5.1 rig, then you really should.

The Samsung HT-BD1255 is one such system, comprising four 'tallboy' speakers (over a metre in height) for the front and surround channels, a compact centre speaker and an elegant slab of electronics that, amongst other goodies, features a Blu-ray player, FM/AM radio and a claimed 1,000W of amplification. Three audio inputs are provided (one of which is analogue) for digital TV boxes and consoles, but video switching is absent.

Systems like this are designed for easy self-installation. And putting together the BD1255 is a simple task; Samsung has even colour-coded the speaker terminals. There is, however, one rather odd anomaly. To ensure correct speaker configuration, there's a noise sequencer that pumps each channel in turn. In this mode, though, no means of adjusting the levels is offered. They can be tweaked in a separate menu, but without the aid of sound, so you have to keep flicking between the two menus until everything sounds balanced. That's a minor moan, though – after all, once it's set up you won't need to revisit these menus until the system is moved to another room (or another house).

The Blu-ray deck supports 1080p24 and BD-Live (but only with a USB stick of sufficient capacity slotted in). There's an Ethernet terminal on the rear, and those with wireless networks can plug in an optional Wi-Fi dongle. The BD1255 can also be used with Samsung's SWA-4000 – a £70 'extra' that allows the surround speakers to be connected to the main unit via radio.

The BD1255's online and USB connectivity gives rise to some worthwhile multimedia tricks. The system can access clips from YouTube, and any video, photos or audio on your home network, USB or disc. Supported formats include MPEG, DivX/XviD, JPEG, .mp4, .mp3 and .mkv/x.264 files. Unfortunately, regardless of their native resolution, still images aren't displayed at anything better than upscaled SD.

A modest 'home cinema solution' it may be, but there's plenty to recommend in the BD1255 – BD visuals prove to be **more than a match for the average budget standalone player**. No matter what you may think of the content, *Disaster Movie* is a visual treat. The vegetation that provides the backdrop to the Gladiator-bout dream sequence opening the film is rich in texture and warm colours, while it's possible to make out every detail in the Amy Winehouse character's tattoos and jewellery. DVDs also look good, the BD1255's upscaling giving your legacy movies a new lease of life.

Sonically, I think the system punches above its weight – certainly with movie soundtracks. Samsung has endowed the front and surround speakers with separate tweeters and mid-range drivers (the centre speaker has two identical drive units), and I was quite taken aback at how dynamic and well-steered 5.1 surround was. Its only obvious downside is an unpleasantly 'thick' character to music playback, and a tendency of the subwoofer to break up at high listening volumes.

## All bases covered

There's no denying that Samsung's HT-BD1255 gives you a lot for the money – practically everything you could want is here. It doesn't pretend to approach the same levels of performance as a separates system, but for the 'non-enthusiast' I believe this is a perfect solution ●

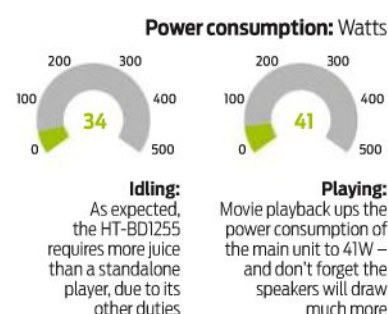
## AV/CV

**Product:** 5.1 Blu-ray system with gadgets aplenty

**Position:** Top of Samsung's BD12xx range

**Peers:** LG HB954PB; Panasonic SC-BT205; Sony BDV-E300

## → Tech Labs



## Loading: Boot/Java

Boot speed & tray eject

4s

Tray in to main BD menu

47s

## Disc loading & Java:

Very fast boot and tray eject times, and above average Java-loading times



## HCC VERDICT

Samsung HT-BD1255  
£500 Approx

**Highs:** Well-featured; decent sound and visuals from movies; good file compatibility

**Lows:** Audio setup issues, disappointing music reproduction and photo playback

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5



# Tentative hi-def

Toshiba finally joins the Blu-ray party with an entry-level player.

**Jim Hill** considers its basic charms

If you can't beat them, join them. It's taken nearly two years, but Toshiba has finally swallowed its pride and launched a Blu-ray player. And before we go any further, no, it doesn't also play HD DVDs. Oh well.

The reason for this deck's existence is clear enough; if you want to sell HDTVs, you need to be able to offer a Blu-ray player to go with them, and selling TVs is what Toshiba does best.

In truth, it's not the most exciting player on the market. The BDX2000 is effectively a stop-gap measure, while Toshiba readies its 2010 range.

Later this year, we expect to see a high-end 3D-capable player from the brand, the BDX3000, joined by the BDX2500, which will offer Wi-Fi (not integrated, but via a dongle) and the

step-up BDX2700, with integrated Wi-Fi support.

Simpler pleasures await the buyer of the BDX2000, such as Regza Link. This is the fancy name for HDMI CEC interoperability with the brand's televisions (much like Sony's Bravia link, or Panasonic's Viera Link). You can use the same remote control to operate both devices, of course, so there is a tangible benefit to sticking with the same brand.

On the plus side, this looks like a typically refined Toshiba product, with its smart multi-faceted front panel gleaming in all directions. Its narrow proportions suggest modernity and it feels well put together. Connections at the back are sparse, though. There are no USB ports analogue nor a multichannel

## AV/CV

**Product:**  
Profile 2.0  
budget  
Blu-ray player

**Positioning:**  
Toshiba's  
entry-level and  
only BD player

**Peers:**  
Samsung  
BD-P3600;  
JVC XV-BP1

output. Instead, BD-Live data is saved onto an SD card, which slots in the front. At least that same slot can be used as an easy way to show off material from your digital camera or camcorder (and owners of the latter should also note that this deck can read AVCHD files). The functionality of the SD slot is rudimentary though, so don't expect to set up any fancy slideshow effects.

Bundled in the package is an HDMI. And on the subject of freebies, our sample also arrived with a year's free subscription to LOVEFILM, the disc-lending service.

## Getting going

Fire this machine up and you're presented with a Toshiba screen-saver and a fairly intuitive GUI. The





bulky remote feels a bit clumsy, but it too is easy to use.

The time it takes to load a BD disc is fast becoming a deal-breaker for many people and I can report this deck is quite tardy, taking 80 seconds to load and play our test Blu-ray disc laden with BD-Live material. That's not up to the speeds attained by either Samsung or LG, but on a par with rival machines from Pioneer and Sharp.

Odd though, is the complete absence of any XDE picture processing. For the uninitiated, that's Toshiba's proprietary upscaling technology designed to make the most of standard-def DVDs. It's a message Toshiba has been pushing hard on its DVD players and we agree that it does work rather well, so it's disappointing not to find it implemented here. I'd rate the upscaling on this deck as average, with some visible blocking and video noise appearing in the background.

## It's a steal

Upscaled DVD is certainly not a patch on the player's Full HD Blu-ray output, which is notably clear and stable. Watching *3:10 to Yuma* with the output at the optimum 1080p24, it's hard not to be impressed by the warm colours of the opening stagecoach robbery scene that was shot in lush late afternoon sun. The

## Something missing?:

Toshiba's first-gen BD deck doesn't feature the brand's XDE upscaling technology

colours are full and vibrant, but natural, and detail is finely rendered.

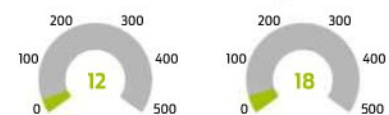
Look closely though and you'll be able to spot a fair amount of dotty, grainy interference in the otherwise clear blue skies. There's also a slight shimmer of distortion on the legs of the galloping horses that a more adept Blu-ray player could cope with. These little things don't really spoil the show, but do stop it from joining the big league of premium machines that can deliver a cleaner picture.

Blu-ray players tend to have a few other party tricks these days, but as I've said, this is a pretty basic unit, so there's no networking features or accessible web content here. The lack of a USB port is more of a surprise, as this has become an almost standard way to get content from your PC onto your TV without messing around with cables and wireless networks.

**I suspect that this deck will be bought primarily by people scooping up a Toshiba HDTV** as part of a bundle deal; and the lure of a single remote control solution and an easy HDMI link between the two is always an appealing prospect. Personally, I'm prepared to wait for the next-generation of Toshiba BD kit. I think only then will we begin to get an idea of what the brand is capable of in the Blu-ray arena ●

## → Tech Labs

### Power consumption: Watts



**Idling:** 12W is probably low enough for you to leave the deck on

**Playing:** An average power consumption figure

### Audio Jitter: Ps



**Analogue:** The BD2000's audio jitter measurement is undistinguished, and not up to the levels of many of its direct rivals

### Loading: Boot/Java

**Boot speed & tray eject**

**16s**

**Tray in to main BD menu**

**80s**

**Disc loading & Java:** Toshiba's debut BD deck is a bit sluggish

## → Specifications

**Upscaling:** YES All resolutions up to 1080p  
**Multiregion:** NO Region B Blu-ray and R2 DVD  
**HDMI:** YES Version 1.3  
**Component:** YES 1 output  
**Multichannel analogue:** NO Stereo phono only  
**Digital audio:** YES Optical and coaxial outputs  
**SACD/DVD-A:** NO/NO Neither supported  
**Dolby True HD/DTS HD decoding:** YES/YES True HD and DTS-HD MA via HDMI  
**Dolby True HD/DTS HD bitstream:** YES/YES  
**Profile 2.0:** YES BD-Live via SD slot  
**Dimensions:** 440(w) x 220(h) x 60(d)mm  
**Weight:** 5.08kg  
**Also featuring:** Regza-Link; 1080p24 playback; AVCHD, WMA, JPG, MP3 and DivX playback



## HCC VERDICT

Toshiba BD2000  
£200 Approx

**Highs:** Handsome styling; slim proportions; handy SD card slot with AVCHD playback  
**Lows:** No USB port or internet connectivity; lack of XDE upscaling is a bit annoying

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5





ADVERTISEMENT



*Seeing is believing*

# looking for a Home C

How easy is it to buy a home cinema system that suits you? You could read the magazine product reviews, find out who sells the recommendations, five-star favourites or best buys at the cheapest price and place your order. When the system is delivered to your door in the box, you get a friend who knows his onions to install it - and live happily ever after.

This is a fairly well-trodden path but it leads to dissatisfaction and a lot of wasted money. Besides there being a bewildering choice of components on the market today, there are also different ways in which components can be installed and connected together. Which sort of visual system do you go for? Projector and screen, plasma or LCD, an HD ready set or one with full 1080p capability? And on the audio side do you plump for a 5.1 or 7.1 speaker system, passive or active sub, and where do you site them for the best results? The choice of home cinema amp raises even more questions. Will you be listening to music through the same system? If so, you need an amp that approaches the performance of a decent 2-channel hi-fi amp, which is not that easy to find. Do you need SACD, DVD-Audio, or Blu-ray capability? How many inputs do you need for video, s-video, component, coaxial digital, optical digital and HDMI? The above are just a small percentage of the decisions that must be made. In short, it's complicated and very fertile ground for getting it wrong.

## Achieving potential

To select a system, you could choose a collection of 'Best Buy' components in the hope that they will be a great combination. Maybe, but probably not. You could buy a pre-packaged all-in-one system from one manufacturer.

This is almost certainly not the best route either as you will miss out on enormous potential. From informal surveys conducted, it appears highly likely that **the majority of home cinema systems selected and installed on a DIY basis, that is without professional input, are performing at way below their optimum level.** To compound matters, most are also ill-matched to the room in which they are installed and are, in reality, the wrong system. Without considerable knowledge or experience, high quality home cinema is not a suitable DIY activity.

Our aim must be to buy a home cinema system that will provide an excellent picture quality plus an audio delivery that will match, or even better, the commercial cinema experience. It must be exciting, reliable and deliver true value for money.

## What and Where to buy

To ensure a home cinema system is right for you, where do you start? Here's an important tip ... **don't** start with **WHAT**, start with **WHERE**. There's only one way to give yourself the best chance of getting it right first time, and that's through a specialist AV dealer. It's possible you have preconceived ideas that put you off visiting one. Although you would welcome the advice and guidance, you don't know the technical jargon. You don't want to be talked down to. Your friend has said they only sell expensive gear and they're not interested if you don't have a big budget. They're expensive. These are just myths.

Most specialist AV dealers are running their business because, above all, home cinema is their hobby. They spend a large portion of their time comparing systems to get the best possible results. They know the component combinations which don't gel together and, conversely, they know the combinations which give the best performance within a given price range. Very importantly, they know how to get a system working to its optimum. But they all also know the system must suit **you**.



“...without considerable knowledge or experience, high quality home cinema is not a suitable DIY activity”

# inema

## LISTED HERE ARE 20 OF THE BEST AV SHOPS IN THE COUNTRY.

Listed on this page are 20 of the best AV shops in the country. They have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards home cinema systems that will provide years of superlative performance and total satisfaction.

### STAR QUALITIES

VALUE FOR MONEY



SERVICE



FACILITIES



VERDICT



### Buying or being sold to?

There are dealers around, web based or otherwise, who will sell you anything you are willing to pay for. They may be a bit cheaper but that's all they offer. Now there's a group of long-established specialist dealers who are totally committed to putting the customer first. Their idea of 'selling' is to discuss your requirements, offer their advice, give you the best options, then play the systems for you and allow you to be the judge. You'll probably be surprised and, almost certainly, relieved to discover how easy it is to see and hear the differences between components and between systems. You'll be able to make a clear and informed decision about what to buy.

The story doesn't end there. These shops won't abandon you once you've put your hand in your pocket. They won't leave you to set up the system you've selected as best you can. They'll install it in your home, make sure it performs to

its best, and ensure you're entirely happy with the way it works. Why? Because a high proportion of these dealers' custom comes through people who have bought from them before, either directly or by recommendation. It's vital to them to get it right for you.

### Getting the best deal

Unless you've got money to burn, you'll be living with your new system for years. Most of these dealers offer much longer equipment guarantees than provided by the manufacturer, a very worthwhile benefit, but it also makes it in the dealer's interest to ensure high build quality and reliability. Maybe you could save a few pounds by buying piecemeal but you'll lose out on the overall package. As far as the dealers are concerned, they believe that taking care of their customers properly is a nicer way of doing business than just handing over boxes.

# system?..

## ...Ask the experts



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**Chelmsford RAYLEIGH HI-FI**

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**Colchester RAYLEIGH HI-FI**

33 Sir Isaac's Walk. 01206 577682

**Kingston-upon-Thames INFIDELITY**

9 High Street, Hampton Wick.

020 8943 3530

**Maidenhead AUDIO VENUE**

36 Queen Street. 01628 633995

**Rayleigh, Essex RAYLEIGH HI-FI**

44a High Street. 01268 779762

Custom Install Dept.

01268 776932

**Southend-on-Sea RAYLEIGH HI-FI**

132/4 London Road. 01702 435255

**Tunbridge Wells KENT HOME CINEMA**

69 London Road, Southborough.

01892 535007

#### LONDON

**N1 GRAHAMS HI-FI**

190a New North Road. 020 7226 5500

#### SW11 ORANGES & LEMONS

61-63 Webbs Road, Battersea.

020 7924 2040

**Ealing AUDIO VENUE**

27 Bond Street. 020 8567 8703

#### MIDLANDS

**Coventry FRANK HARVEY HI-FI EXCELLENCE**

163 Spon Street. 024 7652 5200

**Nottingham CASTLE SOUND & VISION**

48/50 Maid Marian Way. 0115 9584404

**Solihull MUSIC MATTERS**

93-95 Hobs Moat Road. 0121 742 0254

#### NORTH

**Chester ACOUSTICA**

17 Hoole Road. 01244 344227

**York SOUND ORGANISATION**

2 Gillygate. 01904 627108

#### SCOTLAND

**Aberdeen HOLBURN HI-FI**

441 Holburn Street. 01224 585713/572729

**Edinburgh LOUD & CLEAR**

Bonnington Mill, 72 Newhaven Rd.

0131 555 3963

**Glasgow GLASGOW AUDIO**

135 Great Western Road.

0141 332 2200/4707



The majority of the above dealers are members of one or both of the major trade organisations, BADA or CEDIA.



Yamaha's new AVR is an all-round performer



# Face of the future

While Yamaha's new GUI and fascia design isn't **Richard Stevenson's** cup of tea, this AVR still sounds as good as ever

There comes a time in the development life cycle of electronic equipment where things get a bit, well, *Terminator*. Your electronics get ideas of their own and start ordering you about. For instance, Yamaha's RX-V2065 receiver suggested, in no uncertain terms, that I leave the room while it sets itself up. Yikes.

Of course, this request is to protect one's sensitive ears from loud noises during set up – which is quite ironic as less than two minutes out of the box this Yamaha could be turning your liver inside out with its bass power and punch. In fact, the interface and personal requests are

all part of Yamaha's brand-new GUI, which has been designed to make setting up a complex beast like this near £1,000 receiver simpler than ever. Maybe it is a lack of familiarity, but right now I don't get it.

For starters, access to the set-up functions are buried at the bottom of three or four pages of source selection icons. The only feature you would *not* go into the menus for is source selection (you can do it via direct keys on the remote and the fascia) so why have pages of icons heading up the menu? When you are into the features and functions area, it is laid out in a disjointed format with lots of unlinked individual pages

rather than traditional left to right flowing menus. I had to refer to the manual on several occasions just to find various functions.

I'm not getting the new cosmetics either. It looks cheaper and feels less solid than Yamaha's previous AVRs at this price, although the brand says build quality is improved over last year's RX-V1900.

It offers some very slick features, though. The 5-in, 2-out HDMI functionality is brilliant, particularly as one input is front-mounted, and the claimed power figures are mighty impressive. Moreover, the RX-V2065 is very much geared up to be a network receiver with both Ethernet



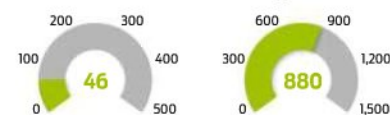


### → Specifications

Dolby Digital TrueHD: YES and Dolby Pro-Logic IIx  
 DTS-HD Master Audio: YES and DTS ES 6.1 Discrete  
 THX: NO  
 Multichannel audio: YES 7x 130W  
 Multichannel input: YES 7.1 channel  
 Multiroom: YES main plus two zones  
 AV inputs: YES 3 composite only  
 HDMI input/output: YES 5-in, 2-out  
 Video upscaling: YES to 1080p  
 Component: YES 2-in, 1-out  
 Dimensions: 435(w) x 365(h) x 171(d)mm  
 Weight: 12.4kg  
 Features: Universal remote; MM phono stage; HDMI audio via PCM and bitstream; iPod dock; Networking via Ethernet; front-mounted USB reader; basic YPAO Room EQ; Auto setup; Headphone with Yamaha Silent Cinema; FM/AM and 'net tuner; multi-function dock port; SCENE selection for individual inputs; compressed music enhancer

### → Tech Labs

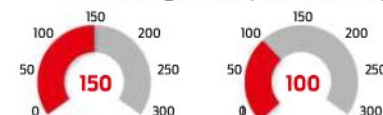
#### Power consumption: Watts



**Idling:** A turnover usage of 46W isn't unusual for a seven-channel AVR of this ilk

**Powered:** In five-channel mode with an 8Ω load the Yamaha RX-V2065 draws 880W

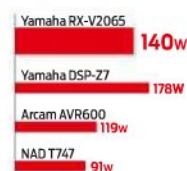
#### Power ratings: Watts (8Ω, 0.5% THD)



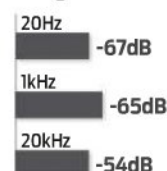
**2-channel 8Ω:** In two-channel mode this Yamaha amp is well over spec

**5-channel 8Ω:** The power rating is quoted at 130W per channel, so this figure, while decent, is below specification

#### Untainted: Watts



#### Signal/noise: dB



#### Fidelity firewall:

Fidelity firewall is a measurement of power achieved before distortion becomes unacceptable. This two-channel performance is up to spec and comparable with similarly-priced competitors

#### S/N tests: The

Yamaha RX-V2065 delivers decent figures at low and mid frequencies, average at high frequencies

and USB inputs; a port for Yamaha's optional Bluetooth receiver or iPod dock; and plenty of dedicated network audio features. There is very simple connection to a PC-based home network, a compressed music enhancer, and tricks like pulling photos from your PC to display onto your TV. And despite what I said about the GUI, the network side of the RX-V2065's is pretty damn straightforward to get going.

Needless to say, it ticks all the boxes in terms of 1080p video upscaling and HD audio decoding although, unlike its direct Onkyo TX-NR807 competitor, it is bereft of Dolby Pro-Logic IIz. Yamaha instead uses its Presence (height) channels at the front with bespoke processing. Equally, like the Onkyo, you will lose rear-back channel amplification to drive the fronts.

Running the auto-set-up, the result is a monster of sound with bass coming in hotter than Angelina Jolie on a skateboard. The sub was set two or three dB strong and the balance with the YPAO RoomEQ set to 'standard' (and that's it for options other than 'off' and 'manual') was fruity and fulsome. Trim back the bass, switch off the YPAO EQ and

### AV/CV

**Product:** 7.1 receiver with new GUI/fascia design

**Position:** One below the top of Yamaha's AVR range

**Peers:** Pioneer VSX-LX52; Denon AVR-2310; Onkyo TX-NR805

there is an amplifier with a heart of gold. It's smooth yet detailed, fast yet subtle, and never once gets you wincing at an over-acerbic high-frequency effect or belly laughing at a bulbous bass note. **It feels mature, grown up and sophisticated** with a fabulous balance between spacious soundstage and accurate positioning of individual sounds.

And this natural balance makes it quite an all-rounder, as happy with all-action blockbusters as it is with a chick flick or a Pixar masterpiece. It feels seamlessly solid and has one of those sounds that lets all the speakers, the amplifier and the mechanics of home cinema simply slip into obscurity, leaving you to enjoy the movie.

### Fire and forget

Okay, it's never going to have your knuckles whitening on the arm of the sofa, and the over-complex GUI is a bit of a letdown. But taken as a whole, Yamaha has developed the RX-V2065 as a 'fire up and forget' receiver for those who just want to enjoy a broad range of movies without too much faffing about. And on that level, it's a rampant success.



### HCC VERDICT

Yamaha RX-V2065  
 £850 Approx

**Highs:** Wonderful natural sound; good with wide range of movies; great networking  
**Lows:** Confusing GUI; slightly flimsy build quality

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5



# Black gold

KEF's entry-level 5.1 home cinema setup impresses **Adam Rayner**

It seems inconceivable that you'd ever be less than impressed by a set of KEF loudspeakers. Yet these, its C Series, are KEF's least expensive, so are they any good? I grabbed my BD copy of *Beowulf* to find out, because the Motion-Capture system that enables a stocky geezer like Ray Winstone to become a 6ft man-god also seems to engender cool sound design. You get raucous party scenes in the mead hall, Grendel the demon talking in Middle English to his mama (voiced by Angelina Jolie) with huge reverb and spaciousness in a vast cavern, and someone getting their arm ripped off in a scrap. It's perfect for giving your speakers a workout.

## Quality tweets

Tweeters are often the most costly bit in loudspeakers and it's usually here that you will first discern excellence or lack of ability. Oddly enough, the C Series high-frequency driver – the same one from the guts of the Uni-Q devices fitted to KEF's Q series – revealed both.

As the movie opens, the background chatter of the crowd in the mead hall is remarkably detailed around the system, with perfect voice-matching. You get depth of soundfield and a sweet vocal from the queen warbling away with her harp. However, ultimate impact and HF level is a little limited, as I found out later.

The subwoofer is a super long-throw 8in design with primitive controls, but it blends perfectly. However, the dynamics of the soundtrack are wider than the small low-power woofer liked, with the explosive entry of Grendel sadly compressed. But for the money, the C4 subwoofer is vastly more musical than most – it didn't boom, or go one-note, proving that although ported, it's not a stretch-it design.

When Ray Winstone fights the monster, I ran the C Series system at a reference level zero dB, and could

easily hear the burning torches crackling in the background. Dynamics are good, too: the scene where a horrible booming roar in a cavern echoes around Grendel's deformed skull needs headroom to play best and the KEFs did admirably, as they were already playing hard. They stay nice and linear at low volumes too – a sign of quality – but when driven with vigour tend to get a bit harsh around the high-end. I am being overly critical, though: it still sounds great for an entry-level array.

In many ways, the buyers of these 'budget' babies benefit most from KEF R&D's years of cunning. That technology goes into the best models, but years later KEF uses all sorts of its heritage to put out affordable kit like the C Series.

There is proof of savings, though, like the square-edged boxes and the less than over-engineered speaker terminals. Still gold-plated, but not chunky and, of course, they don't have the KEF signature Uni-Q point source tech. **Instead, the C Series gets an aluminium dome tweeter and its 'Tangerine' protective grille**, but it is conventionally mounted above the bass drivers.

In terms of design, they aren't exactly up to Philippe Starck levels. The port on the C1 subwoofer, for is not a moulded tube but a cheaper classic wooden slot design. And while there's still a nice set of spikes and a separate panel for the base plate of each C5 or C7, it's all made to a price.

## Value for money

At the end of the day, these big-domed bass drivers with the single cone-stiffening rib are KEF ones, so there is a certain 'given' about the quality. They are fast, tight and very able for their size. Versus an awful lot of what else is out there, you'd have to audition a truckload of £900 speaker systems to find one that would whup the KEF C Series! ●



The C Series draws on technology from models costing considerably more



## AV/CV

### Product:

Sizeable entry-level speakers from one of the most respected brands around

### Position:

Below the Q, XQ, Reference and Muon in KEF's separates line-up

### Peers:

Acoustic Energy Aegis Neo 5.1; Monitor Audio Bronze BR2 AV 5.1; Tannoy Mercury F4 Custom 5.1



## → Specifications

### KEF C5 towers

**Drive Units:** 2 x 5.25in bass drivers and 1 x 0.75in aluminium dome tweeter  
**Enclosure:** Two-way front-slot ported  
**Frequency Response:** 41Hz-40kHz  
**Sensitivity:** 90dB  
**Power Handling:** 15-150W  
**Dimensions:** 177(w) x 915(h) x 260(d)mm

### KEF C6 LCR centre

**Drive Units:** 2 x 5.25in bass drivers and 1 x 0.75in aluminium dome tweeter  
**Enclosure:** Two-way sealed  
**Frequency Response:** 65Hz-40kHz  
**Sensitivity:** 90dB  
**Power Handling:** 10-150W  
**Dimensions:** 430(w) x 177(h) x 211(d)mm

### KEF C1 surrounds

**Drive Unit:** 1 x 4in bass driver and 1 x 0.75in aluminium dome tweeter  
**Enclosure:** Two-way front-slot ported  
**Frequency Response:** 65Hz-40kHz  
**Sensitivity:** 87dB  
**Power Handling:** 10-100W  
**Dimensions:** 150(w) x 260(h) x 221(d)mm

### KEF C4 subwoofer

**Drive Unit:** One 8in front-firing driver  
**Enclosure:** Bass reflex front-slot ported  
**Frequency Response:** 29Hz-140Hz  
**Onboard power:** 200W RMS  
**Dimensions:** 320(w) x 345(h) x 377(d)mm  
**Weight:** 12.2kg  
**Connections:** Single phono input



## HCC VERDICT

KEF C Series AV5 package  
 £900 Approx

**Highs:** Sounds a fat slice better than most other £900 5.1 sets; solid build quality

**Lows:** Funereal design; tweeters can sound a bit harsh when driven with vigour

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5





# best seat in the house



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# A grand idea

Offering unrivalled picture size for your buck, budget projectors are potentially a cash-strapped AV fan's dream come true. Cue **John Archer** going toe-to-toe with three new Full HD projectors costing only £1,000

## THE CONTENDERS

### NEW ACER H7530D

£1,000 Approx

This Full HD model from Acer proves the brand isn't all about making laptops.

### NEW BENQ W1000

£1,000 Approx

A PJ with good specs, but how does all the on-paper finery translate in the real world?

### NEW VIVITEK H1085

£1,000 Approx

A relatively new brand in the UK, Vivitek is out to hit the ground running with the H1085



While the home cinema obsessive in us always lusts after the latest all-singing, all-dancing, high-end projector stars, we still also like a good cheapie – many can't afford nor easily accommodate a no-compromise PJ hero. Thankfully, budget projectors allow people to climb aboard the home cinema bandwagon, and that's fine with us.

With this in mind, we've rounded up three of the cheapest Full HD home cinema projectors around, from BenQ, Acer and Vivitek, and thrown them into our mosh pit. So, how many bigscreen thrills can you get for £1,000?

### Features

At first, I was struck by the similarity of the three projectors, in terms of key specs. But then there aren't as many PJ manufacturing plants around as you might think, so a little shared heritage between different brands' products – especially in the budget realm – isn't unusual.

Each model claims exactly the same 2,000 Lumens maximum brightness output, and has a rudimentary built-in speaker. They each use a six-segment colour wheel – as well as Texas Instruments' BrilliantColor technology for delivering brighter mid tones.

All three projectors enjoy a surprisingly lengthy list of image adjustments, too, including colour management systems to tweak all six of the colour wheel's colours.

In fact, even the onscreen menus of the Vivitek and BenQ models look almost identical, reaffirming my sense of a shared heritage between the two – more proof of this comes from the way the Vivitek and BenQ contenders feature almost identical connections in an almost identical layout. The only differences are a 12V trigger output on the Vivitek and a wired IR port on the W1000.

In terms of connections, the Acer makes a poor first impression by only having one HDMI input versus the two found on the other models.

It eschews 12V/IR jacks, too, and has a single 3.5mm audio input compared to the stereo audio phono and audio outputs found on the Vivitek and BenQ contenders.

The Acer additionally comes up short with colour management, only allowing you to adjust the general saturation of each of the six primary colours. You can't individually adjust hue, saturation and gain of each key element as you can with the other two models.

It's the Vivitek that steals the calibration crown, thanks to its support from the Imaging Science Foundation (ISF), who could be

### FEATURES

**Round up:** All three models have some special feature up their sleeve: ColorBoost II+ with the Acer, OSRAM UNISHAPE lighting with the BenQ, and ISF calibration with the Vivitek. The biggest single deficiency is the Acer's lack of a second HDMI

Acer H7530D: 1 2 3 4 5

BenQ W1000: 1 2 3 4 5

Vivitek H1085: 1 2 3 4 5

## ACER H7530D → £1,000 Approx → [www.acer.co.uk](http://www.acer.co.uk)



### In brief

While all three projectors featured here are designed to cater for predominantly casual users, the DLP-based Acer feels that bit more casual than the others. This is partly due to its compact but aggressive styling, and partly due to some of the features it carries – not least the option to adjust the image based on the colour of your wall paint.

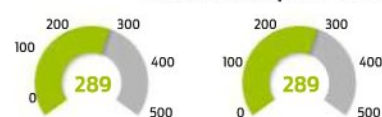
The projector ships with a built-in speaker to aid instant 'plug 'n' play' functionality, and comes inside a handy carry bag.

In other words, Acer sees the H7530D as something that is likely to be put in a cupboard when it is not being used, and dug out only when it is needed. It also makes a play for the business user, courtesy of the Presentations picture preset.

**Light show:** The Acer logo and control buttons light up against the chunky white bodywork

### → Tech Labs

#### Power consumption: Watts



#### White screen:

Running our White 100IRE resulted in a power use a little higher than we expected, but still 'green' compared to many flatscreen TVs

#### Test footage:

There's no significant power consumption change with live footage

#### Contrast: ratio



**Picture:** 540:1 in standard mode, with a high luminance of 33,383fl

#### Colour temp: Kelvin



#### Presets:

A small but useful set of presets, with preset 0 as close to 6500K as you could wish, plus full 'Colour management' (sic) R/G/B/C/Y/M levels and skin tone for perfect adjustment.  
0: 6,466K  
1: 8,255K  
2: 8,676K



called in to professionally calibrate the H1085 if you wanted.

The so-far-uninspiring Acer does have a trio of exclusive tricks, though; it caters for casual users by allowing you to pick from a wide collection of wall colours, so the projector can auto adjust its image to compensate; and it packs Acer's ColorBoost II+ system, which claims to produce richer, brighter colours with smoother gradations.

The BenQ's main exclusive claim to fame is its OSRAM UNISHAPE illumination system, which adjusts the light output in sync with the colour wheel's machinations to boost brightness.

## Design

The BenQ W1000 and Vivitek H1085 are similar in sizes and body shape, but there are big differences in the finishes applied to the core bodywork. BenQ has opted for a nice-looking but slightly cheap-feeling rough cream finish, while Vivitek has gone for a more 'sporty'

high-gloss black. The latter looks more opulent, in my opinion.

Which of the two you prefer may depend on where you're going to site your projector. For ceiling-mounting, you might prefer the BenQ's white finish, as it will blend in with your likely paintwork. If you're going to position your projector on a table in front of your viewing position, though, the Vivitek's black finish is less intrusive in a darkened room.

The Acer H7530D looks quite different to the other two, with a smaller, squarer shape, smooth white/grey finish and bold (and

## DESIGN

**Round-up:** None of these models have the dog-ugly looks you might expect of a budget PJ. Personally I found myself put off by the Acer's gaudily lit buttons, but it's quite a fun-looking device! I liked the look of the BenQ's tactile, nobby finish, but overall the most attractive all-rounder is the glossy, sleek Vivitek

Acer H7530D: 1 2 3 4 5

BenQ W1000: 1 2 3 4 5

Vivitek H1085: 1 2 3 4 5

brash) neon blue-illuminated logo on the top edge. Its flash approach seems targeted at a younger, family, Wii-using audience. Which is fair enough, so long as the H7530D gets serious where it matters...

## Performance

All three of these budget PJ's deliver somewhat similar pictures that are much better than I'd expect for the money, outgunning the already decent quality witnessed recently on Optoma's HD20. But there are enough subtle differences to pick out a winner.

The best place to start with affordable DLP projectors is the rainbow effect. This red/green/blue striping phenomenon, caused by single-chip DLP's colour wheel mechanism, can be really distracting.

I could clearly see the tell-tale stripes on all three projectors during my *Star Trek* run-through, but the level of distraction was less with the Vivitek. As anyone who's witnessed the rainbow effect before will attest, >

**BENQ W1000 → £1,000 Approx → [www.benq.co.uk](http://www.benq.co.uk)**



## In brief

While also sporting a built-in speaker and being small enough to be reasonably portable, the DLP-based W1000 seems more focused on fixed-position home cinema duties than its Acer rival.

There's no carry bag included as standard, for a start, and the onscreen menus are awash – in a good way – with fine-tuning options.

What's more, the projector features the OSRAM UNISHAPE illumination system, which adjusts the lamp output in synchronisation with the DLP colour wheel to boost brightness by up to a claimed 40 per cent.

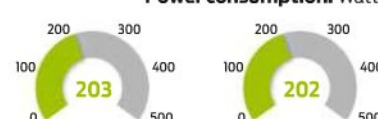
The W1000's high brightness is arguably its biggest concession to the casual market – it should enable the projector to support viewing in a little ambient light if necessary.

## Touch me:

The oddly rough texture BenQ has applied to the W1000's white finish is disturbingly tactile

## → Tech Labs

### Power consumption: Watts



**White screen:**  
The BenQ W1000 uses 203W of power with our white screen test

**Test footage:**  
Again, there was little significant difference in usage with movie footage playing

### Contrast: ratio



**Picture:** A decent contrast measurement in Standard mode, but, strangely, the BenQ W1000 measures lower in Dynamic mode at 809:1

### Colour temp: Kelvin



**Presets:**  
Small but useful range of CT presets, plus full manual R/G/B hue/saturation/gain for perfect adjustment  
**Normal:** 6,876K  
**Cool:** 8,404K  
**Warm:** 5,268K



this really gives the Vivitek a pretty huge early advantage.

To be fair to BenQ and Acer, one of the reasons their rainbow effect is more obvious is that their pictures are a notch or two brighter. This means they drive out *Trek's* opening battle scene with slightly more vigour, becoming potentially more attractive options to people wanting a projector that can function in a degree of ambient light. But personally, with my fully darkened room, I would take a reduction in rainbow distraction over a bit more brightness any day.

When it comes to contrast, there's little between the three projectors. The 40,000:1 contrast ratio claimed by the Acer is hugely optimistic. In fact, subjectively I'd put the Vivitek at the top of the contrast pile, with the Acer second and the BenQ third. But the differences really are minimal.

The Acer's biggest picture appeal comes from its colours, which are delivered with startling vibrancy – especially if you call in BrilliantColor

to accompany Acer's own ColorBoost II+ system. What's more, it combines this raw colour aggression with impressive subtlety.

However, careful comparison across all three projectors suggests that the Acer's vibrancy comes at the expense of colour naturalism. And no amount of tinkering with the H7530D's gamma setting resulted in reds, and especially greens, that consistently looked credible.

Both the other PJs deliver the occasional rogue tone too, but not so often, especially in the Vivitek's case.

Just as the Acer and Vivitek projectors have both so far displayed one 'killer app' in their picture performances, so the BenQ manages one too: HD sharpness. With the W1000, I could pick out slightly more texture in the clothes of the Enterprise crew, for example.

Vivitek's H1085 delivers the least sense of crispness, but still looks definitively HD. In fact, I found its approach more 'cinematic' than the sometimes rather harsh BenQ.

The Vivitek's biggest fault, for me, is the extent to which it suffers with low-level greenish dot crawl while watching dark scenes. This common DLP artefact is more obvious than on the BenQ and Acer models, and marginally reduces the Vivitek's black level response.

As for running noise, none of this trio will win any 'sound of silence' awards. The Acer is a touch noisier than the other two, perhaps, but there's little to choose between the Vivitek and BenQ, at least if you engage their low-lamp modes.

#### PERFORMANCE

**Round-up:** I was really impressed in general by the levels of brightness, colour dynamism and contrast these three projectors produce. In the end, though, the ability of the Vivitek to deliver a subtle and believable colour palette, while reigning in DLP's rainbow effect, makes it my favourite

Acer H7530D: 1 2 3 4 5

BenQ W1000: 1 2 3 4 5

Vivitek H1085: 1 2 3 4 5

## VIVITEK H1085 → £1,000 Approx → [www.vivitekcorp.com](http://www.vivitekcorp.com)



### In brief

The H1085 couldn't be further up the price scale than the first Vivitek model we tested, the £11K LED H9080. But the H9080 was competitively priced for such a high-spec PJ, so you shouldn't be too surprised to find the H1085 undercutting its rivals despite having broadly similar specifications.

Among its key attractions are high brightness and contrast claims

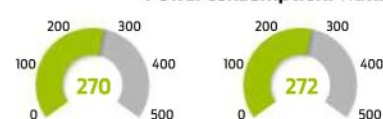
(2000 Lumens and 5000:1 respectively); a startlingly fulsome colour management system that suggests the H1085 belongs in a relatively 'serious' budget home cinema category; three user-definable picture preset slots; and ISF compatibility, where an independent expert could be employed to professionally calibrate the image for you.

### Looks familiar:

Apart from a round lens-housing and shiny black finish, the H1085's core design has a lot in common with the BenQ W1000

### → Tech Labs

#### Power consumption: Watts



#### White screen:

In Lamp Boost mode the Vivitek uses 270W; Standard mode cuts it to 238W

#### Test footage:

Yet again, no real difference in power consumption in our two tests

#### Contrast: ratio



**Picture:** The H1085 offers a reasonable contrast ratio in Normal mode, with a luminance of 20,006fl

#### Colour temp: Kelvin



#### Presets:

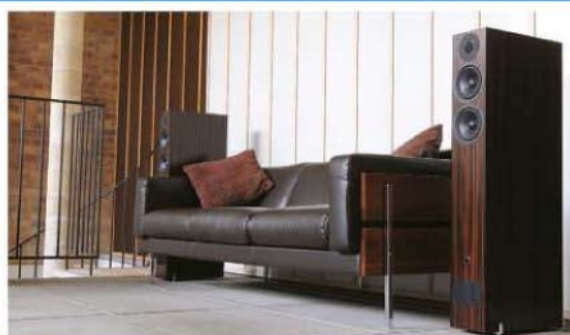
A small but reasonably accurate selection of CT presets; full colour management can be used to achieve spot-on results  
Normal: 6,697K  
Cool: 7,629K  
Native: 6,806K  
Warm: 5,154K



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# Final standings

All of the three projector contenders today are surprisingly good home cinema machines, delivering picture performance standards that would have been unthinkable for £1,000 as little as six months ago. It hasn't proved too difficult to put them into some kind of running order, though – a running order that finds the Acer H7530D coming in last.

When I first turned it on, this outcome didn't seem likely, as I was blown away by the fearsome brightness and intensity of its pictures. But over time I started to rue the lack of a second HDMI, and the slight lack of refinement in its setup options relative to its rivals – especially when it comes to colour management. With this in mind, I can't place it on a level footing with its BenQ and Vivitek competitors.

The BenQ W1000 is the runner-up in our three-way face-off. This model's combination of high brightness and strong sharpness gives it terrific impact, but it lacks a little contrast punch at the lower end of the colour spectrum, and suffers quite markedly at times with DLP's rainbow effect.

Vivitek's H1085 is thus the winner. It's not perfect, by any means – to expect perfection for only £1,000 would be totally unrealistic, after all. But despite a little low-level dot noise and a slight lack of sharpness, it ultimately delivers the most all-round cinematic pictures of our trio and best feature set. While all three of the machines tested here are worth auditioning, it's the Vivitek I suspect you'll be most impressed by.



## HCC VERDICT

Vivitek H1085  
£1,000 Approx

**Highs:** Rich colours; excellent image tweaks; 12V trigger  
**Lows:** Low-level noise in dark scenes; noisy runner in high brightness mode

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

### → Specifications

**HD Ready:** yes 1080p/24 compatible

**Component video:** yes one input

**HDMI:** yes two inputs, both v1.3

**PC Input:** yes one D-Sub

**12V trigger:** yes one input

**Resolution:** 1920 x 1080

**Brightness (claimed):** 2,000 ANSI Lumens

**Contrast ratio (claimed):** 5,000:1

**Dimensions:** 335(w) x 102(h) x 256(d)mm

**Weight:** 3.8kg

**Other features:** BrilliantColor; good colour management system; ISF compatible; built-in speaker; automatic keystone adjustment; 1.6-1.92:1 throw ratio; optical zoom; 3,000-4,000 hour lamp life; flesh tone adjustment

2ND



## HCC VERDICT

BenQ W1000  
£1,000 Approx

**Highs:** Bright picture is good for ambient light; lots of picture adjustments; bold colours  
**Lows:** Rainbow effect again; runs a touch noisily

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

### → Specifications

**HD Ready:** yes 1080p/24 compatible

**Component video:** yes one input

**HDMI:** yes two inputs, both v1.3

**PC Input:** yes one D-Sub

**12V trigger:** no none provided

**Resolution:** 1920 x 1080

**Brightness (claimed):** 2,000 ANSI Lumens

**Contrast ratio (claimed):** 3,000:1

**Dimensions:** 325(w) x 95(h) x 254(d)mm

**Weight:** 3.4kg

**Other features:** OSRAM UNISHAPE system; BrilliantColor colour management system; built-in speaker; automatic keystone adjustment; 1.2:1 optical zoom; 3,000-4,000 hour lamp life

3RD



## HCC VERDICT

Acer H7530D  
£1,000 Approx

**Highs:** Bright and really colourful pictures; decent contrast; has nice touches for casual users  
**Lows:** Rainbow effect; runs a bit noisily; only one HDMI

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

### → Specifications

**HD Ready:** yes 1080p/24 compatible

**Component video:** yes one input

**HDMI:** yes one input, v1.3

**PC Input:** yes one D-Sub

**12V trigger:** no none provided

**Resolution:** 1920 x 1080

**Brightness (claimed):** 2,000 ANSI Lumens

**Contrast ratio (claimed):** 40,000:1

**Dimensions:** 294(w) x 95(h) x 229(d)mm

**Weight:** 3.2kg

**Other features:** Acer ColorBoost II+ technology; BrilliantColor processing; basic colour management system; facility to adjust image to suit different wall colours; 2,500-4,000 hour lamp life; RS 232 control option; carry case; automatic keystone correction; built-in speaker



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Code FICS

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Code HDEX344

**£99.00**

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Code DD740

**£189.99**

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|--|---------|---------------|
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| 1080p rated 10m length                   | HDH0V10 | <b>£32.99</b> |
| Premium range 1080p rated 3m length      | HDH03   | <b>£29.99</b> |
| Premium range 1080p rated 10m length     | HDH010  | <b>£49.99</b> |
| Premium range 1080p rated 15m length     | HDH015  | <b>£59.99</b> |
| professional range 2160p rated 1m        | HDHDC1  | <b>£29.99</b> |
| professional range 2160p rated 3m        | HDHDC3  | <b>£39.99</b> |
| plug professional range 2160p rated 7.5m | HDHDC75 | <b>£69.99</b> |

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|                                   |         |               |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------------|
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|-----------------------------------|---------|---------------|

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|                              |          |                |
|------------------------------|----------|----------------|
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| Component to HDMI            | CP280H   | <b>£119.99</b> |
| RGB to s-video               | RGB2S    | <b>£69.99</b>  |
| HD Component to RGB          | C2RGB    | <b>£99.99</b>  |
| Composite/s-video to VGA     | AVT3300  | <b>£44.28</b>  |
| Composite/video to component | CPVSRGB  | <b>£44.28</b>  |
| Composite/s-video to HDMI    | CM392    | <b>£214.07</b> |

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|------------------------|---------|---------------|
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| sat in chrome          | HCP26S  | <b>£39.99</b> |
| double gang HDMI steel | HCP26SD | <b>£54.99</b> |

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- 20W RMS per channel
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Code KLABKITD

(amplifier, & power supply)

**£149.00**

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Code 8WLS

**£34.99**

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- Operates even through walls
- Supports all 480p, 720p, 1080i and 1080p
- Sends the HD signal uncompressed



Code GV800

**£347.46**

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# PLAYBACK

→ **Software highlights** UP Pixar proves it's still the king of animation studios  
**PANDORUM** Deep-space horror hits Blu-ray **SURROGATES** Sci-fi noir with action icon Bruce Willis  
**WHITEOUT** Kate Beckinsale stars in a snow-bound thriller **THE FINAL DESTINATION** Can 3D save  
 this horror franchise from terminal decline? **LAST ACTION HERO** Arnie in HD! **AND MUCH MORE!**

## Body of evidence

Jennifer's Body → Region B/C BD

Megan Fox leads the cast in this much-hyped teen horror comedy. Was it worth the wait? Read our verdict on p99

### HCC Ratings key

|                  |           |
|------------------|-----------|
| Megan Fox        | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Fantastic Mr Fox | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Samantha Fox     | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Jamie Foxx       | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Basil Brush      | 1 2 3 4 5 |







**Up:** a film that caters for birds, dogs and wilderness scouts, let alone grumpy old men

# Up, up and away

A bittersweet family 'toon on a stunning Blu-ray



**Up** is yet more proof that Pixar is miles ahead of any other American animation studio when it comes to imagination and storytelling. Its latest work is a heart-wrenching but ultimately uplifting story of aging and loss, wrapped up in a family-friendly tale of a bitter old man who relocates his house to South America and begins an adventure that takes in talking dogs, a mythical bird and an endearing young Wilderness Scout. Utterly fab.

**Mark Craven:** We're starting to sound like a broken record when it comes to Pixar Blu-rays, but *Up* delivers yet more flawless hi-def viewing. The AVC 1.78:1 encode is perfect, packed with sumptuous colour and exquisitely delineated fine detailing that shows off the very best of BD. Technically, the disc is without reproach, presenting the source material without a trace of noise, colour banding or artefacting.

**Steve May:** The sound design of *Up* is as mature as Carl Fredrickson, the movie's main character. It's not a film that screams for attention, instead it is smart, restrained and crafty. The dialogue, always clear as CG crystal, is pre-eminent, while Michael Giacchino's memorable, emotional score is only as dramatic as it needs to be. The mix, a 5.1 DTS HD Master Audio concoction, uses the rears to sparing but wonderful effect. The chase scenes gain extra momentum with steered front-to-back

effects, and there's a deep dynamic to the sonic action, though most audio is tethered up front.

**Anton van Beek:** Walt Disney's Blu-ray comes with a small but pleasing collection of extras. The best of the bunch is the Cine-Explore picture-in-picture commentary from director Pete Docter and co-director Bob Peterson. It's an exhaustive and informative look at the film's making, backed up with art and video. Also included are the animated shorts *Partly Cloudy* (which played before the film at cinemas) and *Dug's Secret Mission*; a 22-min *Making of...*; *The Many Endings of Muntz* alternate scene; BD-Live link; Easter Egg; AV calibration tools and a DVD copy of the film.

For those craving more, there's also a BD Special Edition (£27) with all of the above, plus a third disc packing extra featurettes, games and promo material.



## HCC VERDICT

Up → Walt Disney Home Entertainment → Region B  
BD → £24 Approx

**We say:** With its exceptional picture and audio, *Up* is another must-have Pixar Blu-ray

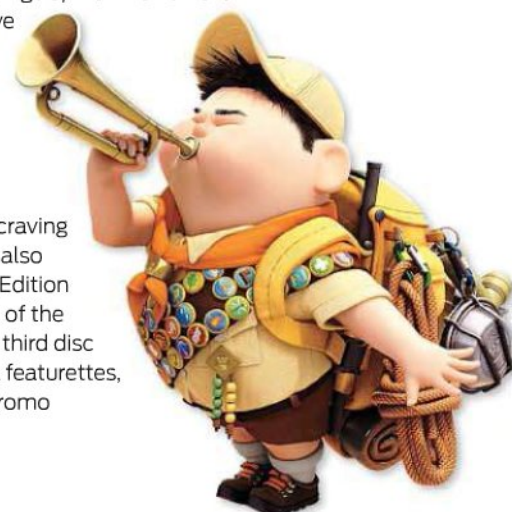
Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

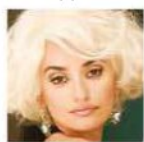
Overall: 1 2 3 4 5





## Broken Embraces

Pathé → Region B BD  
£25 Approx



Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar has made no secret of his love of the classic Hollywood

melodrama, and his latest outing is yet another example of this. Stripped of the 'camp' elements of his earlier flicks, the delightful *Broken Embraces* deals with blind writer-director Harry Caine as he tells his agent's son a tale of love, loss, filmmaking and obsession. Unsurprisingly, it looks sensational in hi-def, courtesy of a beautiful VC-1 2.40:1 encode which makes amends for the rather flat DTS-HD MA 5.1 audio. Extras include a short film, deleted scenes, on-set footage and more. **AvB**



## The Firm

Warner Home Video → All-region BD  
£27 Approx



Director Nick Love's previous movies are an acquired taste, with their realistic, OTT violence and

flowery language, and *The Firm* is no different. However, that's not necessarily a bad thing. Indeed, there's much to like about his remake on Alan Clarke's seminal TV movie. Not only has he found a real star in former ticket tout Paul Anderson (Bex), but he has crafted a clever, touching tale.

Filmed in HD, this BD sports a top-notch VC-1 2.40:1 1080i encode and Dolby TrueHD 5.1 soundtrack. Plentiful extras include a lads' eye-view of the film's production. Tasty! **RH**



## The Final Destination

EIV → Region 2 DVD  
£20 Approx



The 3D horror bandwagon rolls on with this lame attempt to inject some fresh blood into

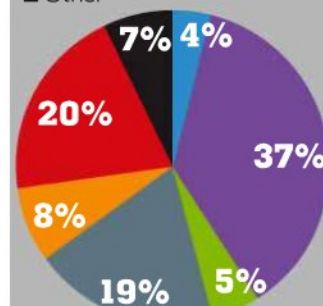
an ailing franchise. Sadly, apart from throwing body parts out of the screen, this latest *Final Destination* comes up with no new twists on the predictable narrative, and the death scenes lack the invention of those that came before. EIV's two-disc DVD serves up a strong anamorphic 2.35:1 transfer on one disc, plus a disappointing anaglyph 3D version on another. Fulsome DD5.1 audio accompanies both versions, but extras are limited. **AvB**



## We asked you...

Which will be 2010's biggest blockbuster movie?

■ Alice in Wonderland  
■ Iron Man 2 ■ Robin Hood  
■ Toy Story 3 ■ Clash of the Titans ■ Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part One  
■ Other



Results of poll from  
www.homecinemachoice.com



# A right old Carrie on!

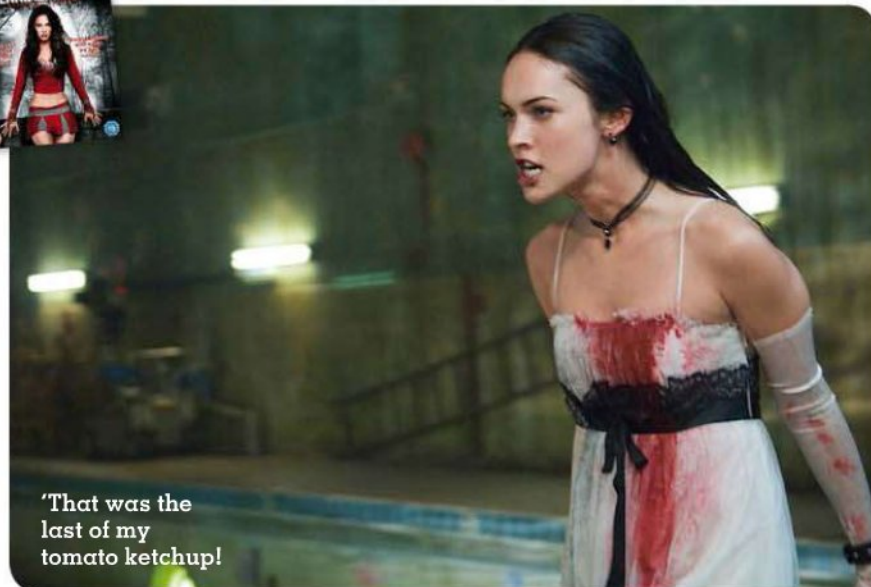
A Foxy feminist slant on the teen horror genre

**Jennifer's Body** died a quick death at the cinemas, barely making back its \$16million budget at the US box office. We've no idea why, but this quirky horror comedy certainly didn't deserve such a fate. Written by Diablo Cody and directed by *Aeon Flux*'s Karyn Kusama, *Jennifer's Body* is a neat feminist spin on the horror genre, with demonically possessed Jennifer (Megan Fox) chowing down on local boys in her smalltown home. The only person who can stop Jen is her best friend Needy (Amanda Seyfried), but does she have what it takes to stop her murder spree?

**Mark Craven:** *Jennifer's Body* unveils itself in hi-def courtesy of a pleasing AVC 1.85:1 1080p encode. While the opening scene in the mental institution suffers from (intentionally) boosted contrast, it soon settles down to deliver a richly-coloured, strongly-detailed presentation that draws you into the action. A couple of night sequences suffer from less-than-stellar black levels, but other than this, I have no complaints at all.

**Steve May:** This lightweight throwback comedy-horror tantalises with a high-resolution 5.1 DTS-HD Master Audio mix that impresses without really pushing the design envelope. Good use is made of an angst-ridden MySpace playlist soundtrack, and Diablo ('spot my cameo') Cody's trademark narration is locked centre-stage, sounding crisp, clean and salty. There is no shortage of jolting effects for AV fans – when Jen makes her gore-soaked return, the soundtrack wastes no time cranking up the scare factor, but if you're seeking a multichannel chiller that's a cut above the norm, you'll need to find something else.

**Anton van Beek:** For reasons best known to itself, 20th Century Fox has begun 2010 by kicking UK Blu-ray buyers in the teeth, metaphorically speaking. First it ditched the commentary that appeared on the US BD of *(500) Days of Summer*. Now this UK BD of *Jennifer's Body* offers just the theatrical and (five-minute longer) extended cut, six deleted scenes and a gag reel. Last year's US Blu-ray offered up all of that, plus a commentary for the theatrical cut, scene-specific commentary on the extended cut, a 14min behind-the-scenes featurette, video diaries, a 26-min Fox Movie Channel interview with Diablo Cody and a Megan Fox PSA. So, thanks for nothing Fox UK!



'That was the last of my tomato ketchup!'



## HCC VERDICT

*Jennifer's Body*  
20th Century Fox  
Region B/C BD → £29 Approx

**We say:** A fun, smart, horror throwback on a good-looking disc, but what happened to all the extras?

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



# The hangover from hell

Ever woken up in space surrounded by killer aliens? It's not recommended

**Pandorum** is a fun piece of sci-fi schlock that feels so like a videogame adaptation (but isn't) that you might end up grabbing your console controller while watching. It kicks off in fine style, with two astronauts awakening onboard their spacecraft with no recent memory. While exploring the ship, they find some very dangerous mutants onboard, and then things get really freaky...

**Mark Craven:** Favouring a dark and dingy visual style, shot through with sickly-looking green, yellow and blue colour washes, *Pandorum* doesn't always demonstrate the virtues of hi-def imagery. On closer inspection though, the AVC 2.40:1 encode holds up very well given the tricky source material. Colours are vivid, detailing is generally very good and, when you get to the odd brighter lit-sequence (such as Leland's lair in Chapter 11) the sharpness of the visuals will blow you away.

**Steve May:** With its unpredictable clanks and shrieks, *Pandorum's* 5.1 Dolby TrueHD soundtrack will rattle even the most steel-nerved viewers. Jurgen Funk's sound design artfully complements Wedigo von Schultzenborff's claustrophobic cinematography, creating a dark, dank dangerous world, while Michl Britsch's score doesn't sound anything like most big-studio takes on the genre. The soundfield itself is fully immersive. There's plenty going on in



Bob's first taste of hydrotherapy was also his last

all corners; the rears aren't just for panning FX. When our hero Bower picks his way through a sleeping nest of aliens, you're right there with him; the LFE is also in near-constant, credible use, either adding depth to the confines of the ship or underpinning the action. Overall, *Pandorum* offers a surprisingly satisfying sonic experience.

**Anton van Beek:** Don't get your hopes up too much for extras on the *Pandorum* Blu-ray. There's an informative commentary by producer Jeremy Bolt and director Christian Alvart (easily the most interesting bonus), 15 deleted/alternate scenes, four stills galleries and a promo-style 14-minute *Making of...* featurette. All of the video content is shown in 1080p, but beyond the commentary, there's little to merit repeat visits.

## HCC VERDICT

*Pandorum*  
Momentum Pictures  
All-region BD → £25 Approx  
**We say:** A solid, if occasionally unspectacular, Blu-ray package for a fun piece of sci-fi schlock

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5  
Sound: 1 2 3 4 5  
Extras: 1 2 3 4 5  
Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

## Sons of Anarchy: Season One

20th Century Fox → R2 DVD  
£25 Approx



FX's *Sons of Anarchy* is a loose reworking of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but set in modern America and

following the illegal activities of the titular outlaw motorcycle club. Across the 13 episodes of Season One you meet the members of the gang, watch them go to war with their rivals, and try to escape the wrath of an ATF agent. This four-disc set serves up strong anamorphic 1.78:1 transfers and DD5.1 audio. Extras are a trio of very good episode commentaries, four featurettes, 35 minutes of deleted scenes and a gag reel. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

## Doctor Who: Peladon Tales

BBC DVD → R2 DVD  
£30 Approx



The latest *Doctor Who* collection comprises two Jon Pertwee-era tales, *Curse of Peladon* and

*Monster of Peladon*, which share a setting and several characters. With Katy Manning as the assistant in one and Elisabeth Sladen in the other, it's an unmissable bundle of sci-fi nostalgia. As usual, sterling work has been done to restore the 4:3 picture, and there are fascinating extras including docs, production notes, storyboards, and interviews and commentaries. All that, and Ice Warriors too, makes for a must-have package for Whovians. **CJ**

1 2 3 4 5

## Last Action Hero

Sony Pictures → All-region BD  
£20 Approx



Well done to Sony for digging up this underrated action movie satire for a Blu-ray release.

It's a shame about the total absence of extras, though. For a film so heavily packed with Hollywood references and cameos, it's crying out for a trivia track at the very least.

Still, at least you get a 5.1 DTS-HD mix that revels in the gunfire, squealing tyres and explosions, and heavy metal soundtrack (AC/DC, Megadeth, Aerosmith, etc), but the AVC 2.35:1 encode is rather average, with copious levels of noise and a loss of detail in the darker scenes. **MC**

1 2 3 4 5

## Stan Helsing

Anchor Bay → Region 2 DVD  
£16 Approx



I don't usually subscribe to the idea that films can incite violence, but after 87 minutes of *Stan*

*Helsing*, I'm committing my life to hunting down everybody involved in it. The latest from the 'From One of the Guys Who Brought You Scary Movie' template, this excruciating parody pits stoner Stan Helsing and chums against horror heavyweights Fwedd, Mason, Michael Crier, Needlehead, and Pleatherface. Arguably one of the worst films ever made, it hits DVD with an acceptable anamorphic 1.78:1 transfer, DD5.1 audio and a fair raft of extras, which lift it from zero to one star. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5





**Zonked out:** Looking sophisticated even when blind drunk is the sign of a real lady

# Techno prisoners

There's a lot to like about this sci-fi flick – once you get beyond Bruce's wig

**Surrogates** is definitely a film worth persevering with. The first 10 minutes seem like little more than a hackneyed mix of *Demolition Man*, *Minority Report* and *Total Recall*, only with Bruce Willis in a silly wig; however, by the end of the first act it blossoms into something much more enjoyable – an engrossing, cleverly plotted sci-fi flick with a film noir feel and a couple of standout action sequences.

Willis is given able support by Aussie hottie Radha Mitchell, along with Ving Rhames and James Cromwell. Director Jonathan Mostow (*Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines*) builds the futuristic world – where humans stay at home and conduct their lives through surrogate robots – via a solid blend of CGI and location shooting. He also brings the film in at a very tight 85 minutes. Maybe they should let him make *Transformers 3*...

**Mark Craven:** The majority of my movie-viewing is now via Blu-ray, so I was pleased that I wasn't too put off by *Surrogates*' 2.35:1 anamorphic DVD presentation. Sure, there's some occasional mosquito noise, and scenes that lack image depth and colour punch,

but the print itself is spotless, and certain sequences, particularly the outdoor location shots of Boston, are about the best you'll see on a standard-def platter.

**Rik Henderson:** With all the talk about lossless audio, it's easy to forget how good lossy Dolby Digital 5.1 soundtracks can get. The DD5.1 mix on *Surrogates*' DVD release provides ample proof of this – a raucous, bombastic affair that generates a convincing 3D soundscape, teaming with excellent positional effects and some seriously weighty bass.

**Anton van Beek:** The only extras present on this R2 DVD are an audio commentary by director Jonathan Mostow and a music video for a song you've probably never heard of. If you want additional featurettes/deleted scenes you'll need to shell out for the Blu-ray edition. That said, Mostow's commentary is a cracker. It may be a one-hander, but there's no dead air and he goes into exquisite detail about the entire film's production, covering pretty much everything you'd expect from a *Making of...* doc.



## HCC VERDICT

*Surrogates* → Walt Disney Home Entertainment → R2 DVD  
£16 Approx

**We say:** An enjoyable sci-fi romp given short thrift in terms of extras on DVD

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5





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# More blood, vicar?

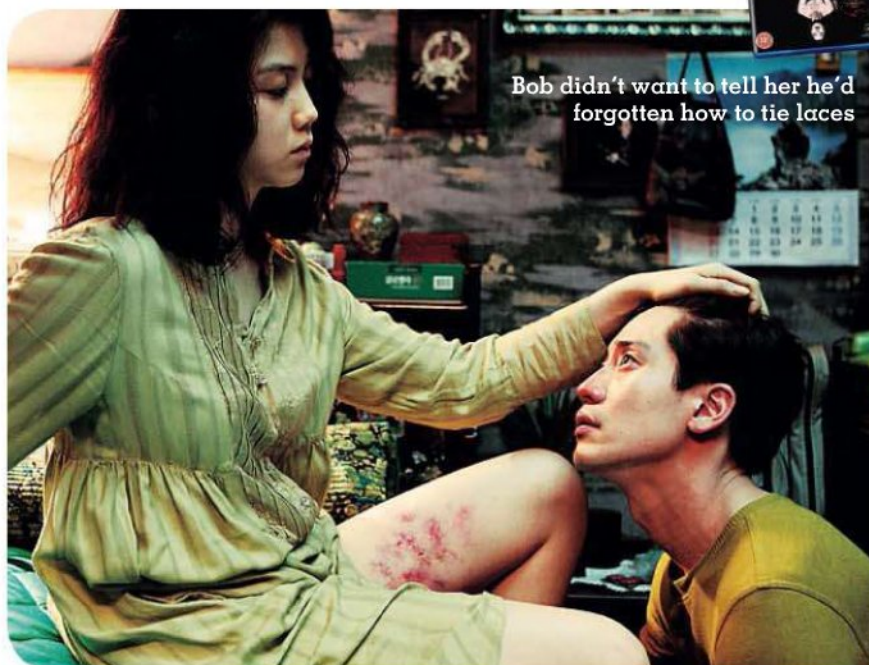
This fangtastic Korean vampire flick has plenty of bite

**Thirst** finds *Oldboy* director Park Chan-wook trying his hand at the vampire genre. And, as fans of his earlier films might expect, the result is darkly humorous, completely unconventional, and utterly excellent in every way.

Song Kang-ho plays Sang-hyeon, a young priest who becomes a vampire after a blood transfusion. Working at a hospital for terminal patients gives him all the blood he can crave, but things get really complicated when he truly embraces his new life – beginning a torrid affair with the wife of an old friend and granting her eternal life as well.

**Mark Craven:** Park Chan-wook's unique take on the vampire genre makes for a beautiful hi-def viewing experience. While its disc might come up a little short elsewhere (see below), there's no denying the quality of the AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode that Palisades Tartan has sourced for this BD platter. Fine object detail is exceptional, colours are perfectly rendered and there's not a trace of any technical issues (macroblocking, mosquito noise, colour banding, etc) with the source material or the encode itself. Let's hope that the company maintains this high standard.

**Steve May:** Those looking for a sonic revelation will find their faith (at least partially) rewarded with *Thirst*. This offbeat tale has a marvellously unpredictable, if somewhat spare, soundtrack that provides a neat counterbalance to the striking visuals. The soundtrack, a 5.1 DTS-HD Master Audio Korean mix, is weighted to the front L/C/R, but effects slurp out when appropriate and the technical clarity is high. What's particularly refreshing is that *Thirst* challenges preconceptions throughout. The use of Bach on the soundtrack



Bob didn't want to tell her he'd forgotten how to tie laces

is surprising, but strangely in keeping with the off-kilter nature of Park Chan-wook's vision. Not your usual vampire fare for sure, but curiously involving all the same.

**Anton van Beek:** Sadly, the Korean company handling *Thirst*'s native release hadn't sorted its supplementary material by the mastering deadline for this UK disc, so Palisades Tartan has been left to create its own bonus features. What we've ended up with (a 14-min interview with the director, 13-min Q&A at the National Film and Television School and trailer – all in hi-def) are fine, but a film this good is crying out for more.

## HCC VERDICT

*Thirst* → Palisades Tartan Region B BD → £25 Approx

**We say:** A stunning hi-def outing for this Korean vampire flick, which only comes up short in terms of extras

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

## Coffin Rock

High Fliers → R2 DVD  
£13 Approx



This Australian alternative to *Fatal Attraction* stars Lisa Chappell as Jessie, one half of a married couple struggling to get pregnant. After a drunken row with her husband, Jessie has an ill-advised quickie with enigmatic stranger Evan, and soon discovers she has a bun in the oven. Who is the daddy, Jessie's hubby or the obsessive Evan, who has his own plans for mother and child?

This engaging thriller has a good-looking anamorphic 1.78:1 transfer, lively stereo and Dolby Digital 5.1 audio mixes, and an informative 30-min *Making of...* documentary. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

## The Beast Stalker: 2-Disc Collector's Edition

Cine Asia → R2 DVD  
£16 Approx



At first, this two-disc set looks like the slick DVD package Dante Lam's acclaimed Hong Kong crime movie deserves. But it soon becomes apparent that it has issues, as the anamorphic 1.78:1 transfer is an obvious standards-conversion job with all the frame blurring you'd expect, robbing the film of any visual panache. Elsewhere, the interviews and featurettes are superficial and reveal little about the production. Happily, the wonderfully enveloping DD5.1 soundtrack packs a real punch. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

## House

Eureka Entertainment → R2 DVD  
£18 Approx



Eureka unearths another little-known gem for its Masters of Cinema Series with the UK DVD debut of

Obayashi Nobuhiko's 1977 outing *House*. Explaining the plot is impossible, but it involves some Japanese schoolgirls and a deadly house, and feels akin to being in Hunter S Thompson's drug-addled brain while watching a *Scooby-Doo* marathon on TV. Bonkers, but brilliant.

This wacky one-off has been treated to the usual quality treatment we've come to expect from the label, including a remastered anamorphic 1.55:1 transfer, 88 minutes of interviews and a collectible booklet. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

## Pontypool

Kaleidoscope → All-region BD  
£20 Approx



Stephen McHattie is a late-night DJ who keeps hearing reports about mysterious acts of violence

in a small Canadian town. Set mainly in a radio station, this low-budget chiller injects fresh life into the zombie genre thanks to great performances from the leads and a cracking central concept. The AVC 2.35:1 1080p imagery looks sharp for a indie flick, while the audio is a restrained DTS-HD 5.1 affair. Extras include a chatty commentary from the writer and director, two short films, the trailer, a photo gallery and a BD-exclusive 56-minute radio adaptation. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5



## For All Mankind

Eureka → Region B BD  
£23 Approx



*For All Mankind* was a labour of love for journalist-turned-documentary filmmaker Al Reinert;

he convinced NASA to let him go through 6,000 hours of negatives about the Apollo project. The story of the 24 men who travelled to the moon uses their words and images to make remarkable, beautiful cinema. Despite much of the footage being blown up from scratchy 16mm stock, the AVC 1.37:1 encode looks surprisingly good, but the DTS-HD MA and Dolby TrueHD 5.1 mixes are also limited by the source. Top-notch extras include a chat track, *Making of...* and more. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

## Soul Power

Eureka → All-region BD  
£23 Approx



The directorial debut of *When We Were Kings* editor Jeffrey Levy-Hinte, *Soul Power* draws on the

same footage as the award-winning documentary. But the focus here is on the three-day music festival 'Zaire '74' that took place in its build-up. Featuring a legendary lineup, it's a fantastic concert doc, and this Masters of Cinema BD works wonders with the grainy 16mm footage. Even more impressive are the Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD MA 5.1 mixes. Bonus goodies include extra scenes and performances, an interview with the director, trailer and a 36-page booklet. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

## Shorts

Warner Home Video → All-Region BD  
£23 Approx



While the rest of the world waits for him to start on *Sin City 2*, one-man studio Robert Rodriguez

seems content to keep knocking out family films inspired by his kids. This one isn't too bad (especially for those under ten), focusing on some kids who find a magic stone that makes their wishes come true. Cue giant robots, spaceships, superpowers and more. This Blu-ray edition boasts a curious, waxy VC-1 1.78:1 encode and a punchy Dolby TrueHD 5.1 soundtrack. Extras are limited to two short behind-the-scenes featurettes, plus Ten-Minute Cooking and Film Schools. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

## Stardust: Special Edition

Paramount → All-region BD  
£20 Approx



I have a soft spot for Matthew Vaughn's 2007 adaptation of Neil Gaiman's debut novel *Stardust*,

and the Blu-ray only enhances it. This 'Special Edition' offers an impressive AVC 2.40:1 encode, but ditches the old HD DVD's Dolby Digital+ 5.1 mix for a more full-blooded DTS-HD MA 5.1 soundtrack. Much improved extras include a commentary by Vaughn and co-writer Jane Goldman, five-part 55-min *Making of...* doc, featurette with Gaiman and illustrator Charles Vess, five deleted scenes, a blooper reel and the trailer. Lovely. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

# Snow reason to get excited

Even Kate Beckinsale in her pants can't warm up this chilly thriller

**Whiteout** is the kind of high-concept idea Hollywood thrives on. A US Marshall stationed in an Antarctic base is probably not going to see as much action as you might think, but the self-exile of Kate Beckinsale is rudely awakened when a 'popsicle' corpse is found out on the ice. Soon the body count is building up faster than a snowdrift in Dumfries, and a storm is coming that will cut off the base for the winter...

Based on a highly-regarded graphic novel by Greg Rucka, *Whiteout* takes what could be a taut, economic premise and turns it into slow-moving slush. You know a movie is in trouble when the opening reel is a lazy, lingering shower-scene. And at the end it's all that remains memorable.

**Mark Craven:** While by no means bad, this Blu-ray's 2.40:1 framed AVC 1080p encode can best be described as inconsistent. Filmed in subzero conditions, with Canada's frozen Lake Manitoba doubling for the Antarctic, the production team make it clear in the accompanying *Making of...* doc that they faced

some weather-related difficulties on the shoot, and this has clearly affected the quality of the imagery. Some exterior scenes offer remarkable clarity, while others are far murkier. Interiors fair better, though, with improved fine detailing and warm fleshtones.

**Steve May:** In an effort to create the illusion of excitement, *Whiteout*'s 5.1

DTS-HD Master Audio mix is all frantic score and trowelled-on wind effects. Despite making a lot of noise there is nothing in the audio design to make the frigid location even vaguely believable. In many respects, this movie sounds just like any standard US TV action hour. It's hardly worth the effort of powering up your AV receiver.

**Anton van Beek:** There's not much to get excited about when it comes to extra features here.

All you get are a pair of 12-min featurettes (one about the shoot, the other about adapting the original comic series for the screen), two deleted scenes and a trailer – all in HD. The good news for this Region B title is that the US release fared no better in this regard.



Kate finally cornered the snowman thief



## HCC VERDICT

Whiteout → Optimum  
Region B BD → £20 Approx

**We say:** A somewhat disappointing Blu-ray disc for a somewhat disappointing film

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



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42PFL9664 42" LCD TV

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It's a remarkable feat of design, on or off.



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Viera TX-P46Z1  
WirelessHD Plasma TV

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### Sony BDP-S760

Award-winning player from Sony. Other models include the entry-level BDP-S360.



### Sony BDP-S5000ES

The BDP-S5000ES is a cinephile-grade machine with full Profile 2.0 support, internal decoding and bitstreaming of DTS-HD and Dolby TrueHD.



## HOME CINEMA AMPLIFIERS & RECEIVERS



### Sony STR-DH800

If you're looking for your first home cinema receiver, this award-winning Sony should definitely be on your shortlist.



### Denon AVR-2310 | AVR1910

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### Yamaha DSP-Z7

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# Feedback

Got an axe to grind? Want to comment on current technology? Need to share? **HCC** is here to help

## Standard-def lite

Like most readers I like to keep up with the latest technology and will often go one step further than reading your reviews and inspect new televisions in the shops. Without fail they will be displaying a high-definition broadcast, or Blu-ray, but generally staff are only too happy to switch to a standard-definition image if they can sniff a sale in the air. That is when these beautiful-looking sets fall down. I have a Pioneer PDP-436SXE, not even a Kuro, and I haven't found one that can match it for a standard-def picture – and that, after all, is what many of us watch most of the time. There must be a lot of disappointed customers out there. Bearing in mind that probably applies to most of the world, I'm beginning to wonder why no one has tried to take up Pioneer's baton when it comes to excellent all-round images.  
*John Rankine, via email*

**You make a good point, but there's no doubt that TV picture processing continues to improve. Your Pioneer display is unusual in that it is a 1024 x 768 display. This means that it has brighter, bigger pixels than current Full HD screens, which in turn makes it kinder to standard-definition images, yet it is still able to display a nice 720p hi-def picture. If the bulk of your viewing is regular TV and DVD, it will continue to do a grand job. But with more HD content becoming available we suspect your interest may ultimately shift to a screen able to make the most of this. And that's when you will really see the benefits.**

## I want better audio

I have recently bought a Sony BDP-S560 Blu-ray player, which I believe is able to decode all the current audio formats. It is connected to a Sony STR-DE695 AV receiver via a digital coaxial cable and the sound is very immersive.

My question is: with the receiver being old in tech terms, will I be getting the best out of my Blu-ray discs, or is it time for an upgrade to my receiver – and, if so, will I notice a big difference?

*Edward Kelly, Isle of Man*

**If you had bought a Blu-ray player with multichannel analogue outputs, you could have run these into**



## I'm no longer an early adopter!

I was delighted to read *HCC* #178, but my delight turned to dismay when I read your article regarding the HDMI v1.4 profile required to view the new 3D Blu-ray content. More specifically, the fact that none of my current kit supports this profile.

Over the last two years, I have purchased a Sony DA-5300ES AVR, a JVC DLA-HD1 projector, a Pioneer PDP-LX5090 TV and an LG BD-390 Blu-ray player. When I'm told that not a single item of my high-end setup is compatible with 3D technology, nor is it upgradable with a firmware update, you will have to excuse me if I feel more than a little angry.

The whole HDMI specification has been

the 5.1 analogue inputs of your STR-DE695 (the ones originally provided for DVD-Audio and Super Audio CD). Decoding for Blu-ray's lossless

formats could have been done in the player and delivered to the AVR. As it is, you will only hear conventional 'lossy' DD 5.1 and DTS coming through

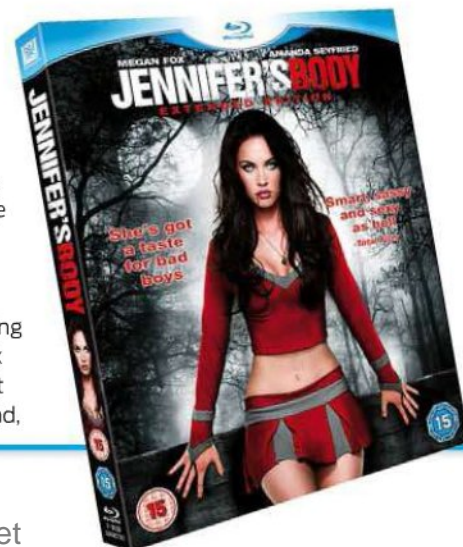


Pioneer's PDP-436SXE has a resolution favourable to SD

a complete joke since day one. Firstly, we were advised to buy a piece of equipment which was profile v1. Then v1.1 was released, and so on and so forth, until we have now been presented with v1.4. The joke of it is that none of the AV kit available, aside from the PlayStation 3, is upgradable, effectively rendering everything out there obsolete!

I am already on my third BD deck in as many years because of this ridiculous rate of change. It seems like the industry is alienating the very people that invest serious money in their high-end products. Early adopters are constantly being asked to bend over and pick up the soap, and it's just not fair. The more that you spend,

the more that it stings every time the industry does a U-turn. The fact that I, as an AV enthusiast, am expected to ditch my current TV, projector, receiver and Blu-ray player and start all over again for the privilege of donning a pair of 3D glasses in my living room is beyond belief.





## Sign up to HCC online!

Don't be an Alan Smithee! Joining *Home Cinema Choice's* online community is free, fast and fun

On the home page of [www.homecinemachoice.com](http://www.homecinemachoice.com), scroll down the right-hand side of the page until you see the Login box. Click the *Join Here* button, choose a username and then create your profile. You can upload an image to represent you online and use your signature to tell fellow AV fans about your own system automatically every time you post. Joining the big AV debate online has never been easier!



your digital connection. There's no doubt that upgrading the receiver to one able to decode Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio via HDMI, like the £350 STR-DH800, will give you a big boost in performance.

### Thank Who!

Just a note from the guys in the Doctor Who Restoration Team to thank you for honouring us with the award for 'Best DVD Exclusive' in the HCC 2009 Awards. We appreciate the recognition, especially as it's from the country's premiere mainstream home cinema mag!

*Steve Roberts, Senior Post*

*Production Engineer, BBC Studios and Post Production*

It's our pleasure Steve – congratulations once again on your win. We doff our collective caps to the fabulous work you guys have been doing. On a broader note, we continue to be astounded by the benefits new digital restoration techniques are bringing to our hobby. We just love having to buy those old classics all over again!

### Shortage of 7.1

I have been a reader of your mag since day one. I would like to know why many amplifiers don't have metal binding posts

But if you're keen to enter the third dimension, you'll first need to consider a 3D TV display – and there's some great ones coming this year – and a source. To carry on using your AVR, you'll want a 3D Blu-ray player with two HDMI outputs. Currently, only Panasonic has announced such a model. Its DMP-BDT350 has one v1.4 HDMI out to deliver 3D images to a screen, and a second to take lossless audio to the AVR. Of course, with only a limited number of discs coming to market this year, you might not feel the need to rush.

**Winner:** Star Letter-writer Nathan Kemp wins a copy of *Jennifer's Body* on Blu-ray (in glorious 2D HD...) courtesy of 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment. It's available to buy from 22 February, priced £20 approx.

So anyway, I am one early adopter who has finally had enough. I'll be buying my cheap-as-chips, Profile v2.5, 3D BD deck from my local supermarket in three years' time for £50. That way I really won't care when it becomes obsolete two weeks later.

*Nathan Kemp, Berkshire*

You wouldn't want technology to stand still would you? We've been watching 3D develop behind the scenes for more than 12 months now, and even the most cynical of our reviewers admit that 3D is a dramatic leap forward in the home entertainment experience.

Obviously, you could just sit back and get the most from your (excellent) system, and, when natural replacement cycles kick in, enjoy that fact that you'll probably get 3D compatibility as standard.

for speakers, as all good speakers have them. They don't cost much.

Also, are we not going to have 7.1 DTS audio on Blu-ray discs, as most of us have a setup for 7.1?

*Jamie, via email*

The number of 7.1 DTS-HD Master Audio titles is undeniably thin, but that's simply because the majority of releases aren't lucky enough to have been lavished with such sonic-sational attention to detail. But when they come along, they're usually treasures well worth tracking down. Read our Playback reviews so that you don't miss out.

Moving on, the issue of binding posts is entirely down to cost. Even when individual components are seemingly inexpensive, they collectively become burdensome to manufacturers. In terms of bangs for the buck, though, modern AVR receivers offer quite astonishing value for money.

### What's in your Labs?

Why don't you ever test AV receivers in 7.1 mode? I want to know an amp's true power output before I buy. I am a Hong Kong movie fan and just about every BD release of that ilk carries a 7.1 mix. Update your hardware reviews to 7.1 status and your mag will be perfect.

Oh, and in case you are interested, I am one of the many people with no interest in 3D!

*Adrian Naunton, via email*

Happily, we've recently installed new test equipment to do just that. Our Audio Precision APx585 Multichannel Audio Analyser will be in service soon; we're just running tests to establish working methods. Expect an update on this and our other new testing kit in the near future ●

Write to Letters, Home Cinema Choice, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW, or email us at [hcc@futurenet.co.uk](mailto:hcc@futurenet.co.uk). Due to the volume of letters we receive we cannot guarantee to print/answer them all.

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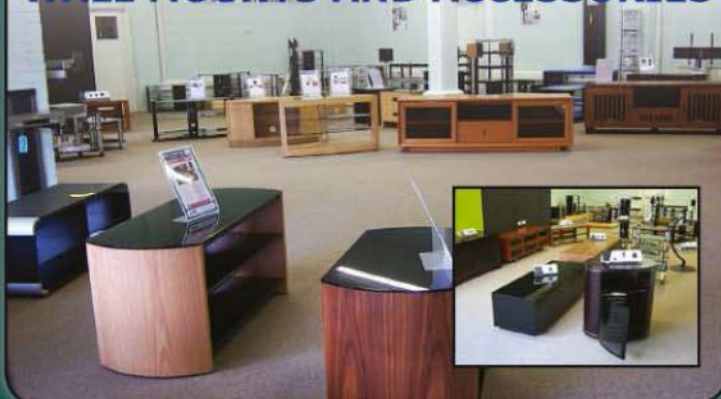
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# How we test

Home Cinema Choice's hardware reviews combine the subjective opinion of our seasoned reviewers with hard technical data.

**Chris Jenkins** explains how the HCC Tech Labs work

**HCC** reviews tend to be a mixture of subjective opinion and objective data. While we value the subjective opinions of our highly experienced reviews team, we like to blend and balance their opinions with objective measurements. The HCC Tech Labs have been measuring AV equipment for nearly 20 years. It was originally conceived to evaluate the performance of VCRs and CRT TVs, and it is now routinely testing Blu-ray players and HD displays.

Interestingly, much of our first generation hardware is still in use (we maintain an irrational fondness for an oscilloscope used to determine the onset of clipping on amplifiers), although our more venerable hardware is now supplemented by new software and measurement methodologies. One thing remains unchanged though: our commitment to supply you with the best possible buying advice.

## Virtual Tour

Our Tech Labs consist of two main facilities: a Viewing Room, and a Test Lab.

The Viewing Room is used mainly for testing TVs, projectors and speakers and has been designed to reproduce the conditions that are found in a typical mid-range home cinema setup. It was created by award-winning custom installers Pounds ([www.poundstv.co.uk](http://www.poundstv.co.uk)), and is completely light-proofed. While it is not designed to be sound-proof, it has been skinned in Acoustiblock and has been acoustically treated and tuned by the experts at RPG ([www.rpg-europe.co.uk](http://www.rpg-europe.co.uk)), using custom absorbers and diffusers. The room features multiple HDMI, component video and audio cable runs, as well as analogue and digital TV and satellite feeds, and has a resident 7.2

speaker system. Multiple screens can be fed the same source material simultaneously, courtesy of a Gefen 2-in-4-out HDMI switcher/splitter, for screen shootouts.

## Number crunching

The Test Lab is used mainly for number-crunching DVD/Blu-ray players and amplifiers. It's equipped with two industry-standard systems: a Tektronix VM700 video data analyser, and an Audio Precision APX585 multichannel audio analyser. Using standard test signals from discs and signal generators, these two systems are used to measure factors such as audio and video signal jitter, frequency response and output power. These give us a good general idea of the component quality, processing power and overall performance of players and amplifiers.

## Professionals at large

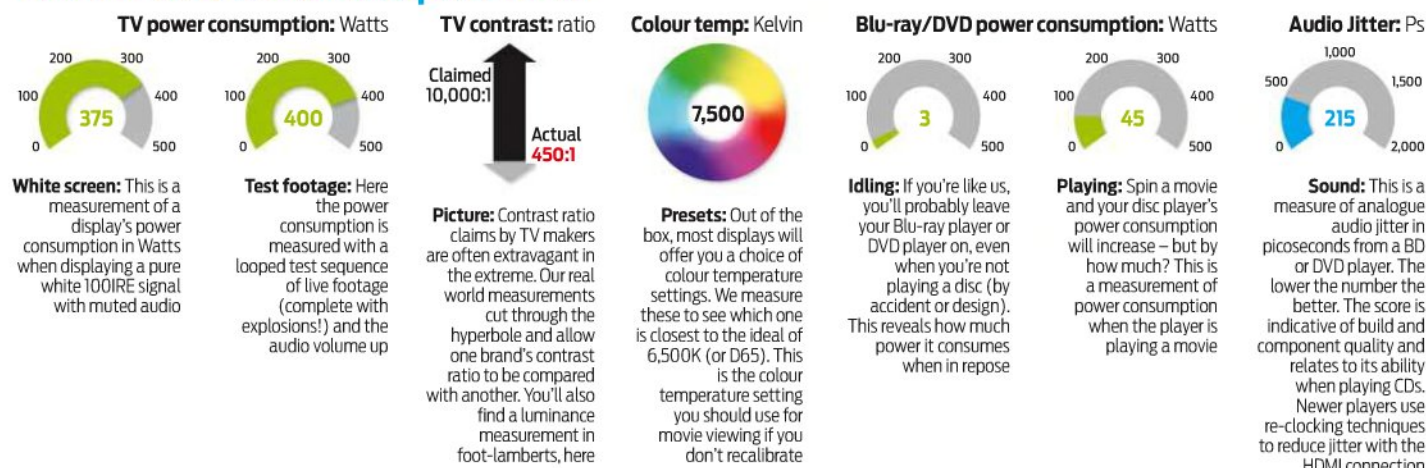
Over the years, our testers have been trained in calibration and testing techniques by the ISF, Tektronix, the Home Acoustics Alliance and other industry bodies. In short, when you read a review in HCC, you can be sure that the reviewer's subjective opinion is backed up by objective scientific lab testing.

## Understandable and useful

One of our pledges is to present information that is both understandable and useful, for example, exposing the hype perpetrated by some makers of plasmas and LCD TVs regarding contrast ratios. To determine real world contrast, as well as measuring colour temperature presets, we employ a Sencore VP401 signal generator alongside a PC running Datacolor Colorfacts software with a Spyder 2 sensor. We use the Sencore signal generator and our own discs to generate standard TV



## Tech Lab tests explained







### Test bench:

Equipment from the likes of Snell & Wilcox, and Tektronix allows us to compare all manner of kit

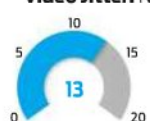
signals. Colorfacts analyses the colour and luminance performance of TVs and projectors, giving us information in areas such as contrast ratio, colour temperature and luminance.

### Playback

Increasingly, you've been asking for more information on power consumption, and so we've now moved these

results to a headline position on our tests. We've also developed a more graphical presentation (key below) of some of the data we produce, which should make the facts more relevant and digestible. Not all the data we generate is published (frankly, you'd be bored) but all of it goes into the melting pot of opinion. While one key reviewer is bylined for our tests, as many as four team players will contribute to our findings ●

#### Video Jitter: Ns



**Vision:** This is a measure of video jitter in nanoseconds from a BD or DVD player. The lower the number the better. The score is indicative of build and component quality. We also present figures for Chroma Crosstalk (another quality indicator) and frequency response @5.8MHz

#### Loading: Boot/Java

Boot speed & tray eject

15s  
Tray in to main BD menu 45s

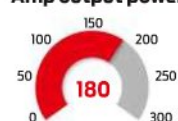
**Disc loading & Java:** Blu-ray players can be notoriously slow to load and play discs, thanks to the DRM and Java content of BD software. These timings are crucial to the user experience – naturally faster is best

#### AVR power: Watts



**Powered:** When you fire up that big AV receiver to watch a new movie you may be surprised to learn just how much current it's drawing. This is one of two measurements we take for AV amp power consumption. The other is when the AVR is powered up but idle

#### Amp output power: Watts (8Ω, 0.5% THD)



**2-channel 8Ω:** So just how heroic is that AVR you've been saving for? Putting aside paper claims, we measure its output in two-channel stereo mode. Also noted here is a figure for Total Harmonic Distortion



**5-channel 8Ω:** In most cases, an amplifier's muscle will be diminished when it runs in multichannel mode. We push the product to extremes in a 5.1 configuration to see how much grunt is available with all channels driven

#### Pure power: Watts

|                   |      |
|-------------------|------|
| Onkyo TX-SR607    | 130W |
| Marantz AV8003    | 110W |
| Denon AVR-2800    | 148W |
| Sony STR-DA5300ES | 80W  |

**Fidelity firewall:** This is our measurement of power untainted by distortion (typically 0.052THD, 8Ω, 1kHz). It's an indicator of both power output and component quality

#### Signal/noise: dB

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| 20Hz  | -79dB |
| 1kHz  | -75dB |
| 20kHz | -48dB |

**S/N tests:** These amp measurements reveal the ratio of noise to signal at a specific frequency. Readings taken at low, mid and high points help determine imaging clarity and sonic character



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11/09



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09/09



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High budget kit which touches the boundaries of home cinema.



Monitor Audio Bronze Series Home Cinema

WHAT HI-FI?  
★★★★★  
06/07



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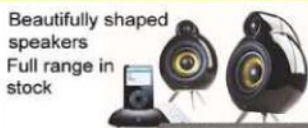
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QED

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09/06  
WHAT HI-FI?  
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SOUND AND VISION

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£4.00 per / metre

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£4.00 per / metre 07/08

QED Silver Anniversary XT Evolution  
£5.85 per / metre 10/09

QED Silver Anniversary XT Bi-Wire  
£7.70 per / metre 10/06

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£13.50 per / metre 10/08

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## HCC Ratings key

|                    |           |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Officially awesome | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Essential purchase | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Does the job       | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Disappointing      | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Don't touch it     | 1 2 3 4 5 |



# LCD TV

## Best on test...



**SONY**  
46in → KDL-46Z5800  
£1,900 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

First ever Bravia with a built-in Freesat HD tuner

**Highs:** Picture performance; 200Hz tech put to good use  
**Lows:** CCFL-backlight; limited net interactivity

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)  
1920 x 1080 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 4  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: 1  
Digital tuner: Yes (and Freesat HD and CI slot)

**Tested:** Issue 177  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)



**TOSHIBA**  
46in → 46SV685DB  
£2,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Debut LED-backlit screen from Tosh is a real eye-opener

**Highs:** Excellent contrast and detail; good quality audio; multimedia talents  
**Lows:** Not particularly stylish

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)  
1920 x 1080 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 4  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: 1  
Digital tuner: Yes (and CI slot)

**Tested:** Issue 177  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.toshiba.co.uk](http://www.toshiba.co.uk)



**SAMSUNG**  
46in → UE-46B8000  
£1,800 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Top-flight edge-lit LED panel will sell like hot cakes

**Highs:** Outstanding picture quality; 200Hz works well  
**Lows:** Some of the settings are awful; limited viewing angle

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)  
1920 x 1080 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 4  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: 1  
Digital tuner: Yes (and CI slot)

**Tested:** Issue 174  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.samsung.co.uk](http://www.samsung.co.uk)



**LG**  
42in → 42SL9000  
£1,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

LG's LED-lit 'Seamless' LCD offers excellent value for money

**Highs:** Exceptional pictures; ISF-certified calibrated controls  
**Lows:** Black levels aren't A-list; 'Seamless' design isn't all that

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (to 1080p24)  
1920 x 1080 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 4  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: 1  
Digital tuner: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 178  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.lge.com/uk](http://www.lge.com/uk)



**SHARP**  
52in → LC52LE700E  
£1,900 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Bigscreen LED LCD with calibration skills

**Highs:** Low power use; bright, involving pictures  
**Lows:** Muted reds; poor off-axis viewing; average audio

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (to 1080p24)  
1920 x 1080 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 4  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: 1  
Digital tuner: Yes (& CI slot)

**Tested:** Issue 176  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.sharp.co.uk](http://www.sharp.co.uk)

## Also Recommended...



**SONY**  
46in → KDL-46Z5500  
£1,900 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

2009 Z-Series builds upon previous Bravia know-how

**Highs:** Wonderfully detailed pictures; bright, crisp colours  
**Lows:** Black levels are a tad light; poor off-axis viewing

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)  
1920 x 1080 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 4  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (2 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: 1  
Digital tuner: Yes (and CI slot)

**Tested:** Issue 173  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)



**SAMSUNG**  
32in → LE32B650  
£650 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Net-savvy 32incher is a real bargain buy

**Highs:** Huge feature count; excellent HD pics; sexy design  
**Lows:** SD performance and audio is average

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)  
1920 x 1080 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 4  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: 1  
Digital tuner: Yes (and CI slot)

**Tested:** Issue 172  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.samsung.co.uk](http://www.samsung.co.uk)



**LG**  
32in → 32LH4000  
£460 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Budget offering from LG delivers where it counts

**Highs:** Exceptional value; good design; connectivity and images  
**Lows:** Black levels; restricted viewing angle; audio is average

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)  
1920 x 1080 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 3  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (2 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: 1  
Digital tuner: Yes (and CI slot)

**Tested:** Issue 172  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.lge.com/uk](http://www.lge.com/uk)

## Editor's Choice...

**PHILIPS**  
56in → Cinema 21:9  
£4,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5



Philips' groundbreaking ultra widescreen TV needs to be seen to be believed. It's deceptively large (about as wide as a traditional 65in TV) and genuinely brings a sense of cinema to your 2.35:1 movies. Expanded 16:9 material is surprisingly watchable, too. There are other frills here – Ambilight, 200Hz processing, five HDMI inputs, Net TV and DLNA certification – but it's the forward-thinking design and technology of the 21:9 that will blow you away. Whether the concept takes hold remains to be seen, though.

**Tested:** Issue 171  
**For more info visit:** [www.philips.co.uk](http://www.philips.co.uk)

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)  
2560 x 1080 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 5  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (2 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: 1  
Digital tuner: Yes (and CI slot)



# Plasma TV

## Best on test...



**PIONEER**  
60in → KRP-600A  
£5,000 Approx



Kuro with separate media box, Ethernet and satellite tuner

**Highs:** Awesome black levels; colour accuracy; slim panel; media-savvy

**Lows:** Problems with AVI files

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)  
1920 x 1080 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 4  
No. of Scart inputs: 3 (2 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: Yes  
Digital tuner: Yes (plus CI slot and DVB-S2 tuner)

**Tested:** Issue 164  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.pioneer.co.uk](http://www.pioneer.co.uk)



**PANASONIC**  
65in → TX-P65V10B  
£4,500 Approx



Currently the biggest, bestest plasma you can buy

**Highs:** High-impact bigscreen pictures; Freesat HD

**Lows:** Lack of manual colour temp controls; sucks electricity

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)  
1920 x 1080 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 4  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (2 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: Yes  
Digital tuner: Yes (plus Freesat tuner and CI slot)

**Tested:** Issue 174  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.panasonic.co.uk](http://www.panasonic.co.uk)



**PANASONIC**  
50in → TX-P50V10B  
£1,900 Approx



THX-certified, Viera Cast-touting NeoPDP

**Highs:** THX mode is stunning out of the box; good feature set

**Lows:** Unspectacular black level response; a bit chunky

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)  
1920 x 1080 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 4  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (2 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: Yes  
Digital tuner: Yes (plus Freesat tuner and CI slot)

**Tested:** Issue 178  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.panasonic.co.uk](http://www.panasonic.co.uk)



**PIONEER**  
50in → PDP-LX5090  
£2,500 Approx



Baby brother of the LX6090 Kuro panel

**Highs:** Unbelievable contrast and black levels; superb detail

**Lows:** Speakers are an optional extra only

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)  
1920 x 1080 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 3  
No. of Scart inputs: 3 (2 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: Yes  
Digital tuner: Yes (plus CI slot)

**Tested:** Issue 159  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.pioneer.co.uk](http://www.pioneer.co.uk)



**LG**  
32in → 32PG6000  
£500 Approx



World's smallest 32in plasma challenges LCD rivals

**Highs:** Smooth movement; good blacks and connectivity

**Lows:** Lack of detail; some jagged edges; average audio

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes  
1024 x 720 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 4  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: Yes  
Digital tuner: Yes (plus analogue)

**Tested:** Issue 162  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.lge.com/uk](http://www.lge.com/uk)

## Also Recommended...



**LG**  
50in → 50PG6000  
£1,100 Approx



Superb HD Ready plasma offering great value for money

**Highs:** Extensive calibration possibilities; excellent black level; sexy bezel

**Lows:** Not Full HD

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes  
1366 x 768 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 4  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: 1  
Digital tuner: Yes (plus CI slot)

**Tested:** Issue 154  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.lge.com/uk](http://www.lge.com/uk)



**PANASONIC**  
37in → TH-37PX80  
£650 Approx



Small PDP from Panasonic continues the Viera vibe

**Highs:** Beautiful blacks; natural colours; good GUI

**Lows:** HDMI v1.2 inputs lack DeepColor support

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes  
1024 x 720 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 3 (v1.2)  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: Yes  
Digital tuner: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 162  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.panasonic.co.uk](http://www.panasonic.co.uk)



**SAMSUNG**  
50in → PS50A556  
£1,000 Approx



Bargain-priced monster screen with a few caveats

**Highs:** Superb specification; great build quality; sharp detail

**Lows:** Some motion artefacts and noise visible

### → Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)  
1920 x 1080 resolution  
No. of HDMI inputs: 3  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: Yes  
Digital tuner: Yes (plus CI slot)

**Tested:** Issue 161  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.samsung.co.uk](http://www.samsung.co.uk)

## Editor's Choice...

**PANASONIC**  
46in → TX-P46Z1  
£4,300 Approx



THX certification, full 1080p wireless transmission, ultra-thin design...

Panasonic's flagship plasma TV is a giant leap forward for the display technology. Add in the Freesat HD tuner, Viera Cast and DLNA networkability and stunning HD and SD pictures and you begin to understand the premium price tag. Some might argue that its black levels aren't as jaw-dropping as a Pioneer Kuro – but those screens aren't being made any more. The Z1 is simply the best plasma TV you can buy.

**Tested:** Issue 172  
**For more info visit:** [www.panasonic.co.uk](http://www.panasonic.co.uk)

### → Specifications

HD Ready: yes (up to 1080p/24)  
Native resolution: 1920 x 1080  
No. of HDMI inputs: 4 (v1.3)  
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (RGB)  
No. of component inputs: 1  
PC input: Yes  
Digital tuner: Yes (and Freesat)





# Blu-ray Players

## Best on test...



**DENON**  
Blu-ray → DVD-AIUD  
£4,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Reference universal Blu-ray player that sets new standards

**Highs:** Stunning life-like picture; genuine hi-fi sound; awesome DVD upscaling

**Lows:** Complex to set up; not for those on a budget!

### → Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0  
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p  
Analogue audio output: Yes (7.1)  
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes  
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes  
DVD-A/SACD playback: Yes/Yes  
Networkability: Yes, via Ethernet

**Tested:** Issue 178  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.denon.co.uk](http://www.denon.co.uk)



**SAMSUNG**  
Blu-ray → BD-P3600  
£250 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Top-level Samsung BD spinner

**Highs:** Impressive pics and sound; 7.1-channel output; DivX HD playback

**Lows:** No WMA support; PC streaming tricky to set up; Wi-Fi requires dongle

### → Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0  
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p  
Analogue audio output: Yes (7.1)  
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes  
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes  
DVD-A/SACD playback: No  
Networkability: Ethernet, Wi-Fi via supplied dongle, USB

**Tested:** Issue 174  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.samsung.co.uk](http://www.samsung.co.uk)



**LG**  
Blu-ray → BD390  
£290 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Improved players sports more features than BD370

**Highs:** Excellent performance; 1GB internal storage; Wi-Fi net connection, 7.1 analogue outputs

**Lows:** Audio can't match its premium BD rivals

### → Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0  
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p  
Analogue audio output: Yes (7.1)  
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes  
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes  
DVD-A/SACD playback: No  
Networkability: Yes, via Ethernet/Wi-Fi (including YouTube), USB

**Tested:** Issue 174  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.lge.com/uk](http://www.lge.com/uk)



**PANASONIC**  
Blu-ray → DMP-BD80  
£350 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Flagship 2009 deck adds YouTube fun to top-class specs

**Highs:** Full multichannel outputs; superb, detailed images; net functionality

**Lows:** Uninspired design; sluggish loading times

### → Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0  
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p  
Analogue audio output: Yes (7.1)  
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes  
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes  
DVD-A/SACD playback: No  
Networkability: Ethernet, VieraCast, SD card slot, USB 2.0

**Tested:** Issue 169  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.panasonic.co.uk](http://www.panasonic.co.uk)



**DENON**  
Blu-ray → DBP-1610  
£400 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Affordable Denon deck benefits from brand's attention to detail

**Highs:** Good, natural-looking picture; quality audio performance; great value

**Lows:** No analogue outs; slow to load our test disc

### → Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0  
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p  
Analogue audio output: Yes (stereo only)  
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes  
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes  
DVD-A/SACD playback: No  
Networkability: Ethernet, SD card slot for BD-Live

**Tested:** Issue 177  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.denon.co.uk](http://www.denon.co.uk)

## Editor's Choice...

**SONY**  
Blu-ray → BDP-S760 → £380 Approx

1 2 3 4 5



Sony has a few Blu-ray decks now that are comfortably better than its PlayStation 3 console, and the keenly-priced S760 is our favourite. It incorporates the HD Reality Enhancer and Super Bit-Mapping picture-processing tech of its £1,200 BDP-S5000ES stablemate (albeit in a thinner chassis) and the results are startling – detailed, deep, colour-rich HD visuals and quality surround sound delivery. Some might miss the lack of esoteric codec support (no MKV here, folks) but that's not what this Sony is about – consider it a reference machine for the budget-conscious.

**Tested:** Issue 176  
**For more info visit:** [www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)

### → Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0  
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p  
Analogue audio output: Yes (7.1)  
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes  
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes  
DVD-A/SACD playback: No/No  
Networkability: Ethernet; Wi-Fi; USB

## Also Recommended



**PIONEER**  
Blu-ray → BDP-LX52  
£500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Stripped-down LX-branded player is a mid-range marvel

**Highs:** Class-leading picture and sound

**Lows:** Not simple to get to grips with; multichannel PQLS function only works on LPCM

### → Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0  
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p  
Analogue audio output: Yes (stereo only)  
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes  
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes  
DVD-A/SACD playback: No/No  
Networkability: Yes via Ethernet; USB

**Tested:** Issue 176  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.pioneer.co.uk](http://www.pioneer.co.uk)



**PHILIPS**  
Blu-ray → BDP7300  
£230 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Debut UK deck from Philips was worth the wait

**Highs:** Internal 1GB storage; multichannel analogue outputs; vivid, detailed image

**Lows:** Stylised 'curved' look not for everyone

### → Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0  
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p  
Analogue audio output: Yes (5.1)  
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes  
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes  
DVD-A/SACD playback: No  
Networkability: Yes via Ethernet; USB

**Tested:** Issue 175  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.philips.co.uk](http://www.philips.co.uk)



**SONY**  
Blu-ray → BDP-S360  
£190 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Affordable Sony Blu-ray is a real rival to its PS3

**Highs:** Stylish design and good AV performance; very solid construction

**Lows:** External memory required for BD-Live access

### → Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0  
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p  
Analogue audio output: Yes (stereo only)  
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes  
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes  
DVD-A/SACD playback: No  
Networkability: Yes, via Ethernet

**Tested:** Issue 175  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)



# Recorders

## Best on test...



**SONY**  
DVDR → RDR-HXD995  
£250 Approx



Heavyweight Freeview+ unit with features galore

**Highs:** Excellent AV performance; flexible recording modes; multimedia prowess

**Lows:** Records 'interactive red dot'; possible aerial sensitivity

### → Specifications

HDD size: 250GB  
Twin tuners: Yes, digital and analogue  
HDMI: Yes  
Component output: Yes  
Camcorder input: Yes  
Format: -R/RW, +R/RW  
Dual-layer recording: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 165  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)



**HUMAX**  
Freesat PVR → Foxsat HDR  
£300 Approx



First Freesat HD PVR brings extra clout to fledgling system

**Highs:** Cinch to operate; good performance; ITV in HD; JPEG/MP3 playback

**Lows:** Annoying LCD; slow to boot up; needs more HD content!

### → Specifications

HDD size: 320GB  
Twin tuners: Yes, Freesat HD (satellite – requires dish)  
HDMI: Yes  
Component output: No  
CI slot: Yes  
Freeview+: No

**Tested:** Issue 165  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.humaxdigital.com/uk](http://www.humaxdigital.com/uk)



**SAGEM**  
PVR → DTR67500T  
£180 Approx



500GB Freeview+ PVR with USB archiving

**Highs:** Capacious HDD; flexible and intuitive EPG; picture quality is excellent

**Lows:** No way of importing recordings from other devices

### → Specifications

HDD size: 500GB  
Twin tuners: Yes, Freeview  
HDMI: Yes  
Component output: Yes  
CI slot: No  
Freeview+: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 173  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.sagem.com/uk](http://www.sagem.com/uk)



**LG**  
DVDR/3.1 → HRT403DA  
£500 Approx



Convergence king offers 3.1 audio and HDD/DVD recording

**Highs:** Acceptable, punchy audio; well-specified recorder; quality DVD pictures

**Lows:** Lacks DTS support; no 5.1 upgrade path

### → Specifications

HDD size: 160GB  
Twin tuners: Yes, digital and analogue  
HDMI: Yes  
Component output: Yes  
Camcorder input: Yes  
Format: -R/RW, +R/RW, -RAM  
Dual-layer recording: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 165  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.lge.com/uk](http://www.lge.com/uk)



**TOPFIELD**  
PVR → TF5810PVR  
£350 Approx



Freeview+ PVR with enormous 500GB HDD

**Highs:** Easy to use; PC connectivity; upscales Freeview; twin tuners offer great flexibility

**Lows:** Competing with high-end DVD recorders

### → Specifications

HDD size: 500GB  
Twin tuners: Yes, Freeview  
HDMI: Yes  
Component output: Yes  
CI slot: Yes  
Freeview+: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 156  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.topfield.co.uk](http://www.topfield.co.uk)

## Also recommended



**PIONEER**  
DVDR → DVR-560HX  
£400 Approx



Full PC-linked multimedia jukebox and DVD/HDD unit

**Highs:** Excellent AV performance and features spread; networkability

**Lows:** Jukebox abilities reliant on Windows Media Player

### → Specifications

HDD size: 160GB  
Twin tuners: Yes, digital & analogue  
HDMI: Yes  
Component output: Yes  
Camcorder input: Yes  
Format: -R/RW, +R/RW, -RAM  
Dual-layer recording: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 159  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.pioneer.co.uk](http://www.pioneer.co.uk)



**PANASONIC**  
DVDR → DMR-EX79  
£300 Approx



2009 DVD/HDD recorder improves slightly on the EX78

**Highs:** AV performance is first-rate; heaps of features and recording flexibility

**Lows:** No STB control; can't copy DivX/JPEG to HDD

### → Specifications

HDD size: 250GB  
Twin tuners: No, 1 x digital only  
HDMI: Yes  
Component output: Yes  
Camcorder input: Yes  
Format: -R/RW, +R/RW, -RAM  
Dual-layer recording: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 169  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.panasonic.co.uk](http://www.panasonic.co.uk)



**HUMAX**  
PVR → PVR-9300T  
£200 Approx



Souped-up Humax drops USB socket but boosts HDD capacity

**Highs:** Easy and responsive to use; fine AV performance; well-featured

**Lows:** Limited HDMI modes; no USB functionality

### → Specifications

HDD size: 320GB  
Twin tuners: Yes  
HDMI: Yes  
Component output: Yes  
CI-slot: Yes  
Digital tuner: Freeview  
Freeview+: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 162  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.humaxdigital.com/uk](http://www.humaxdigital.com/uk)

## Editor's Choice...

**PANASONIC**  
DVD/BDR → DMR-BS850 → £1,000 Approx



With its 500GB HDD, twin Freesat HD tuners, profile 2.0 Blu-ray player/recorder and Viera Cast online interactivity, this Panasonic deck is clearly the king of convergence. As a BD-spinner it's solid, sharing the gizzards of the brand's DMP-BD60, and as a PVR it's simply brilliant, with the mix of hard disc and Blu-ray drive allowing for all sorts of archiving and editing possibilities. The USB, firewire and SD inputs – and in-built Gracenote database – add even more flexibility.

**Tested:** Issue 170  
**For more info visit:** [www.panasonic.co.uk](http://www.panasonic.co.uk)

### → Specifications

Hard disk: 500GB  
Twin Tuners: Yes 2 x Freesat HD  
Component output: Yes (progressive)  
Freeview+: No, it's Freesat  
Format: BD-RE, BD-R, DVD-R/RW, +R/RW, -RAM  
Dual-layer recording: Yes



# AV Receivers

## Best on test...



**PIONEER**  
AVR → SC-LX82  
£1,900 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

ICE-powered AIR Studios-tuned AVR replaces the SC-LX81

**Highs:** Punchy, highly detailed sound; brilliant features; looks fabulous; solid build

**Lows:** Pioneer doesn't do height/width processing

### → Specifications

Power: 7 x 190W (8Ω)  
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes  
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM)  
Dolby TrueHD: Yes  
DTS-HD: Yes  
Zone 2: Yes, and 3  
Serial port control: Yes  
THX certification: THX Ultra2 Plus  
Component input: 3  
HDMI: 5-in, 2-out (v1.3)  
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

**Tested:** Issue 175  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.pioneer.co.uk](http://www.pioneer.co.uk)



**SONY**  
AVR → STR-DA5400ES  
£1,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Class-leading mid-priced AVR with power and poise

**Highs:** Excellent build; audiophile SACD and CD playback; full of power

**Lows:** No Ethernet port, THX certification or DAB radio

### → Specifications

Power: 7 x 120W (8Ω)  
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes  
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM)  
Dolby TrueHD: Yes  
DTS-HD: Yes  
Zone 2: Yes  
Serial port control: No  
THX certification: No  
Component input: 2  
HDMI: 5-in, 1-out (v1.3)  
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

**Tested:** Issue 166  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)



**ONKYO**  
AVR → TX-NR807  
£800 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Powerful and potent height/width processor at a great price

**Highs:** Full-on gung-ho sound with massive bass; DSX/DPLIIz processing; excellent upscaling

**Lows:** Slightly flimsy build; no USB or multichannel inputs

### → Specifications

Power: 7 x 180W (6Ω)  
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes  
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM/Net)  
Dolby TrueHD: Yes  
DTS-HD: Yes  
Zone 2: Yes and 3  
Serial port control: Yes  
THX certification: Select2 Plus  
Component input: 2  
HDMI: 6-in, 1-out (v1.3)  
Multichannel input: No

**Tested:** Issue 176  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.eu.onkyo.com](http://www.eu.onkyo.com)



**DENON**  
AVR → AVR-4310  
£1,900 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Audyssey DSX-toting AVR will change the way you think about speaker placement

**Highs:** Awesome sound as standard; extra width and height channels are a boon

**Lows:** Lacks the 9.1 DSX option

### → Specifications

Power: 7 x 130W (8Ω)  
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes  
Tuner: Yes  
Dolby TrueHD: Yes  
DTS-HD: Yes  
Zone 2: Yes, and 3  
Serial port control: Yes  
THX certification: No  
Component input: 3  
HDMI: 6-in, 2-out (v1.3)  
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

**Tested:** Issue 173  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.denon.co.uk](http://www.denon.co.uk)



**SONY**  
AVR → STR-DH800  
£350 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Slick, flexible bargain model with provision for wireless multiroom audio

**Highs:** Superb value; big and smooth sound; easy to use

**Lows:** No video upscaling or multichannel inputs

### → Specifications

Power: 7 x 85W (8Ω)  
Upscaling via HDMI: No  
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM)  
Dolby TrueHD: Yes  
DTS-HD: Yes  
Zone 2: No, unless you use S-Air wireless speakers  
Serial port control: No  
THX certification: No  
Component input: 3  
HDMI: 4-in, 1-out  
Multichannel input: No

**Tested:** Issue 178  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)

## Editor's Choice...

**ARCAM**  
AVR → AVR600  
£3,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

British manufacturer Arcam arrived late to the HD audio party, but the AVR600 is certainly worth the wait. Utilising a Class G analogue amplifier, this silver machine is cool-running and efficient, while an entire 'root and branch' overhaul of multichannel AV amp design has allowed Arcam to tackle audio jitter head on. Yet this isn't purely an audiophile product – it's packed with custom install features, offers an insane array of connections, and delivers Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD MA Blu-ray mixes with aplomb. A class act from a classic brand.

**Tested:** Issue 174  
**For more info visit:** [www.arcam.co.uk](http://www.arcam.co.uk)

### → Specifications

Power: 7 x 120W (8Ω)  
Upscaling to HDMI: Yes  
Tuner: DAB/AM/FM  
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD: Yes/Yes  
Zone 2: Yes and Zone 3  
Serial port control: Yes, 2  
THX certification: No  
Component input: 5  
HDMI: 5-in, 2-out (v1.3)  
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)



## Also Recommended...



**NAD**  
AVR → T747  
£1,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Excellent AVR offers more grunt than its specs suggest

**Highs:** Storming all-round performance; eases you into every film; simple to use

**Lows:** No Ethernet or USB inputs; DAB costs extra

### → Specifications

Power: 7 x 60W (8Ω)  
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes  
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM)  
Dolby TrueHD: Yes  
DTS-HD: Yes  
Zone 2: Yes  
Serial port control: Yes  
THX certification: No  
Component input: 3  
HDMI: 4-in, 1-out (v1.3)  
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

**Tested:** Issue 174  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.nadelectronics.com](http://www.nadelectronics.com)



**ONKYO**  
AVR → TX-NR3007  
£1,700 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

9.2-channel HD receiver oozes power and performance

**Highs:** Solid, three-dimensional audio; excellent upscaler

**Lows:** You might not use all the features; looks like every other Onk on the market

### → Specifications

Power: 9 x 200W (6Ω)  
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes  
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM, 'net)  
Dolby TrueHD: Yes  
DTS-HD: Yes  
Zone 2: Yes and 3  
Serial port control: Yes  
THX certification: Yes, Ultra2 Plus  
Component input: 3  
HDMI: 7-in, 2-out (v1.3)  
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

**Tested:** Issue 177  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.eu.onkyo.com](http://www.eu.onkyo.com)



**YAMAHA**  
Amp → DSP-Z7  
£2,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Trimmed-down version of the award-winning Z11

**Highs:** Large sound with huge bass and plenty of detail

**Lows:** Orange display; disconcerting pops when changing sources

### → Specifications

Power: 7 x 140W (8Ω)  
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes  
Tuner: No ('net only)  
Dolby TrueHD: Yes  
DTS-HD: Yes  
Zone 2: Yes, and 3 & 4  
Serial port control: Yes  
THX certification: No  
Component input: 3  
HDMI: 5-in, 2-out (v1.3)  
Multichannel input: Yes (5.1)

**Tested:** Issue 172  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.yamaha-uk.com](http://www.yamaha-uk.com)



# Projectors

## Best on test...



**SIM2**  
DLP → Grand Cinema  
C3X 1080  
£23,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Reference-status PJ with brilliant colour management

**Highs:** Gorgeous design; small form factor; dazzling pictures

**Lows:** SD processing isn't quite hi-end enough for the price

### → Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution  
HDMI inputs: 2  
Component inputs: 1  
D-Sub: Yes  
Brightness (claimed): NA  
Contrast (claimed): 10,000:1  
Lamp life (claimed): 2,000 hours  
Fan noise: NA  
24fps: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 169  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.sim2.co.uk](http://www.sim2.co.uk)



**EPSON**  
LCD → EH-TW3800  
£2,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

A flawless example of cutting-edge 1080p LCD PJ technology

**Highs:** Quiet in operation; looks classy; superb picture; easy setup

**Lows:** Higher-end rivals deliver deeper black levels

### → Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution  
HDMI inputs: 2  
Component inputs: 1  
D-Sub: Yes  
Brightness (claimed): 1,800 ANSI lumens  
Contrast (claimed): 18,000:1  
Lamp life (claimed): 4,000 hours  
Fan noise: 22dB  
24fps: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 167  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.epson.co.uk](http://www.epson.co.uk)



**JVC**  
D-ILA → HD350  
£3,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Fantastically filmic PJ is a steal at £3,500

**Highs:** Stunning picture quality; runs quietly; easy and flexible to setup

**Lows:** No direct PC hookup; DLP rivals may be brighter

### → Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution  
HDMI inputs: 2  
Component inputs: 1  
D-Sub: No, use HDMI instead  
Brightness (claimed): 1,000 ANSI lumens  
Contrast (claimed): 30,000:1  
Lamp life (claimed): 2,000 hours  
Fan noise: 19dB  
24fps: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 167  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.jvc.co.uk](http://www.jvc.co.uk)



**OPTOMA**  
DLP → Themescene HD82  
£2,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

A tasty development of a distinguished product line

**Highs:** Good blacks levels; impressive colour performance; easy to set up

**Lows:** Some dynamic iris noise; some DLP rainbow effect

### → Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution  
HDMI inputs: 2  
Component inputs: 1  
D-Sub: Yes  
Brightness (claimed): 1,300 ANSI Lumens  
Contrast (claimed): 20,000:1  
Lamp life (claimed): 3,000 hours  
Fan noise: 26dB  
24fps: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 173  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.optoma.co.uk](http://www.optoma.co.uk)



**PANASONIC**  
LCD → PT-AE4000  
£2,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Updated flagship PJ adds red-rich lamp and 12V trigger

**Highs:** Smooth filmic pictures; easy to setup and use; handy feature set

**Lows:** Boxy design; be careful with high frame-rate settings

### → Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution  
HDMI inputs: 2  
Component inputs: 1  
D-Sub: Yes  
Brightness (claimed): 1,600 ANSI lumens  
Contrast (claimed): 100,000:1  
Lamp life (claimed): 2,000 hours  
Fan noise: 22dB  
24fps: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 177  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.panasonic.co.uk](http://www.panasonic.co.uk)

## Also Recommended...



**CINEVERSUM**  
LCoS → BlackWing One  
£4,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Sexily-styled French LCoS model undercuts JVC and Sony

**Highs:** Sharp; colourful images; versatile setup and installation options

**Lows:** Average black level lets the BlackWing One down

### → Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution  
HDMI inputs: 2  
Component inputs: 1  
D-Sub: Yes  
Brightness (claimed): 1,200 ANSI lumens  
Contrast (claimed): 15,000:1  
Lamp life (claimed): 2,000 hours  
Fan noise: 20dB  
24fps: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 174  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.cineversum.com](http://www.cineversum.com)



**OPTOMA**  
DLP → HD20  
£900 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Wallet-friendly model is an ideal first projector

**Highs:** Excellent detail resolution; reasonable contrast and brightness

**Lows:** Some fan noise; rainbow effect; limited throw distance

### → Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution  
HDMI inputs: 2  
Component inputs: 1  
D-Sub: Yes  
Brightness (claimed): 1,700 ANSI lumens  
Contrast (claimed): 500:1  
Lamp life (claimed): 4,000 hours  
Fan noise: 29dB  
24fps: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 176  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.optoma.co.uk](http://www.optoma.co.uk)



**VIVITEK**  
DLP → H9080FD  
£10,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

The world's first 'lampless' LED projector

**Highs:** Excellent colour fidelity; great definition; long lifespan

**Lows:** Lacks brightness; early adopters pay for the innovative LED tech

### → Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution  
HDMI inputs: 2  
Component inputs: 1  
D-Sub: No, use HDMI instead for PC hookup  
Brightness (claimed): 1,000 ANSI lumens  
Contrast (claimed): 15,000:1  
Lamp life (claimed): 4,000 hours  
Fan noise: NA  
24fps: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 173  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.vivitekcorp.com](http://www.vivitekcorp.com)

## Editor's Choice...

**SONY**  
SXR → VPL-VW850  
£5,400 Approx

1 2 3 4 5



The successor to the well-received VW80 again shows that Sony's SXR-branded LCoS wizardry can take on any challengers in the high-end projector market. The copious picture tweaks available mean achieving a truly cinematic picture is a doddle; the astonishing contrast ratio and detail levels help, too. Add in the 12V trigger, bundled gamma adjustment software and near silent running, and we reckon this could become an installers' fave.

**Tested:** Issue 174  
**For more info visit:** [www.sony.co.uk/biz](http://www.sony.co.uk/biz)

### → Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution  
HDMI inputs: 2  
Component inputs: 1  
PC compatibility: VGA  
Brightness (claimed): 800 ANSI lumens  
Contrast (claimed): 120,000:1  
Lamp life (claimed): 3,000 hours  
Fan noise: 20dB  
24fps: Yes



# Speaker Systems

## Best on test...



**BOSTON ACOUSTICS**  
5.1 → VS Series  
£5,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Gorgeous-looking, hi-tech 5.1 system for serious cinema

**Highs:** Enormous sound; scintillating HF performance

**Lows:** Subwoofer feels underpowered compared to surrounds

→ **Specifications**

Power handling: 2 x 400, 3 x 250W  
Rears: Direct radiating  
Subwoofer: 1 x 500W  
Finish: Wood; Bookshelf: No

**Tested:** Issue 173  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.bostonacoustics.com](http://www.bostonacoustics.com)



**PIONEER**  
5.1 → EX Series  
£11,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

A stunning 5.1 system to match the brand's high-quality components

**Highs:** Breathtaking accuracy; beautiful imagery and detail; sexy design and solid build

**Lows:** Demands specific room placement

→ **Specifications**

Power handling: 5 x 160W,  
Rears: Direct radiating  
Subwoofer: 250W  
Finish: Gloss; Bookshelf:  
Rears (at a stretch...)

**Tested:** Issue 170  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.pioneer.co.uk](http://www.pioneer.co.uk)



**MONITOR AUDIO**  
5.1 → Vector  
£650 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

5.1 sub/sat system ideal for a small room home cinema

**Highs:** Easy to wall-mount; rugged build quality; thrilling surround sound performance

**Lows:** Subwoofer is punchy and fast, but lacks depth

→ **Specifications**

Power handling: 5 x 80W  
Rears: Direct radiating  
Subwoofer: 100W  
Finish: Matt; Bookshelf: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 176  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.monitoraudio.com](http://www.monitoraudio.com)



**TEUFEL**  
5.1 → System 9  
€4,400 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Potent THX Ultra2-system with industrial styling and build

**Highs:** Great bass extension; huge scale and accuracy; pleasing to look at, too

**Lows:** Stands or wall bracket fittings are extra; subwoofer is huuuuge!

→ **Specifications**

Power handling: 3 x 240W, 1 x 180W  
Rears: Dipole  
Subwoofer: 700W  
Finish: Alu; Bookshelf: No

**Tested:** Issue 166  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.teufel.eu/](http://www.teufel.eu/)



**MISSION**  
5.1 → 79 Series  
£2,400 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Floor-standing system with innovative side-firing bass drivers

**Highs:** Sophisticated and clean-sounding; excellent stereo imagery; easy on the eye

**Lows:** Not the most powerful or deepest bass in its class; won't go super-loud

→ **Specifications**

Power handling: 5 x 200W  
Rears: Direct radiating  
Subwoofer: 300W  
Finish: Gloss; Bookshelf:  
Rears only

**Tested:** Issue 171  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.mission.co.uk](http://www.mission.co.uk)

## Also Recommended...



**JAMO**  
5.1 → A 102 HCS 5  
£330 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Good-value 5.1 system with living-room-friendly size/looks

**Highs:** Relaxed, intelligible dialogue presentation; available online for as little as £200

**Lows:** Subwoofer lacks real subterranean power; small satellites lend a rawness to the audio

→ **Specifications**

Power handling: 5 x 60W  
Rears: Direct radiating  
Subwoofer: 200W  
Finish: Cherry; Bookshelf: No

**Tested:** Issue 170  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.jamo.com](http://www.jamo.com)



**WHARFEDALE**  
5.1 → Diamond 10 HCP  
£650 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Sub/sat system mixes hi-fi roots with a 10in woofer

**Highs:** Powerful subwoofer; exciting treble; highly musical

**Lows:** A little bright at high volume; might not be visceral enough for action movie fans

→ **Specifications**

Power handling: 4 x 75W,  
1 x 120W  
Rears: Direct radiating  
Subwoofer: 150W  
Finish: Wood; Bookshelf: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 176  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.wharfedale.co.uk](http://www.wharfedale.co.uk)



**FOCAL JMLAB**  
5.1 → Dome  
£1,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Stylish 5.1 sub/sat system with remarkable voice

**Highs:** Bold, full and detailed sound quality for music and home cinema; gorgeous design

**Lows:** Large cabinets offer more presence; bit pricey

→ **Specifications**

Power handling: 5 x 100W,  
Rears: Direct radiating  
Subwoofer: 100W  
Finish: Aluminium; red, black,  
white; Bookshelf: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 178  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.focal-uk.com](http://www.focal-uk.com)

## Editor's Choice...

**KEF**  
5.1 → XQ Series  
£5,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

This KEF 5.1 array mixes standmount surrounds with two hulking floorstanders to deliver a massive cinematic audio

experience that's hard to fault – an ideal blend of deep bass, spacious mid-band and crystal clear treble. The design is gorgeous, too – another KEF masterclass in gloss black cabinets (curved to reduce internal reflections) and clearly taking a lead from the brand's awe-inspiring Reference system. Other variants of the speakers are available, so you can spec a more affordable, smaller-room setup should you wish.

**Tested:** Issue 174  
**For more info visit:** [www.kef.com/gb](http://www.kef.com/gb)

→ **Specifications**

Power handling: 2 x 200W, 2 x 120W, 1 x 150W  
Rears: Direct radiating  
Subwoofer: 1 x 200W  
Finish: Gloss  
Bookshelf: No chance





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# Subwoofers

## Best on test...



**NAIM**  
SW → n-Sub  
£1,600 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Class AB amp-driven premium-level subwoofer

**Highs:** Rich, textured bass with tight control; innovative features  
**Lows:** High-end rivals have a bit more grunt to 'em

### → Specifications

Frequency response: 2-Hz-250Hz (claimed)  
Amplifier: 350W  
Driver: 12in  
Weight: 29.6kg  
Enclosure: Sealed  
On-board equaliser: Yes  
Remote control: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 177  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.naim-audio.com](http://www.naim-audio.com)



**MARTINLOGAN**  
SW → Descent i  
£3,250 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Weapons-grade unit with 3 x 10in woofers

**Highs:** Superb engineering; Reference standard performance  
**Lows:** Bulky and premium-priced; no automated setup

### → Specifications

Frequency response: 18Hz-120Hz (claimed)  
Amplifier: 500W  
Driver: 3 x 10in  
Weight: 47.7kg  
Enclosure: Sealed  
On-board equaliser: No  
Remote control: No

**Tested:** Issue 167  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.martinlogan.com](http://www.martinlogan.com)



**BOWERS & WILKINS**  
SW → ASW608  
£300 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Compact subwoofer ideal for smaller rooms

**Highs:** Excellent grip and musical low-end control  
**Lows:** Limited by its size

### → Specifications

Frequency response: 23Hz-140Hz (claimed)  
Amplifier: 200W  
Driver: 8in  
Weight: 8.85kg  
Enclosure: Sealed  
On-board equaliser: Yes  
Remote control: No

**Tested:** Issue 160  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.bowers-wilkins.com](http://www.bowers-wilkins.com)



**VELODYNE**  
SW → DD-10  
£1,900 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

We love the see-thru version of this excellent bass shifter

**Highs:** Thrilling performance, special edition finishes  
**Lows:** You can get more muscle for the money

### → Specifications

Frequency response: 18-120Hz (claimed)  
Amplifier: 1,250W  
Driver: 10in  
Weight: 26kg  
Enclosure: Sealed  
On-board equaliser: Yes  
Remote control: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 158  
**For more info visit:**  
[www.velodyne.com](http://www.velodyne.com)



**VELODYNE**  
SW → SPL-1200 Ultra  
From £1,400 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Potent sub – now with custom finish options

**Highs:** Tight, powerful bass; useful auto-calibration  
**Lows:** Few added benefits over the step-down model

### → Specifications

Frequency response: 21-120Hz (claimed)  
Amplifier: 1,200W  
Driver: 12in  
Weight: 22kg  
Enclosure: Sealed  
On-board equaliser: Yes  
Remote control: Yes

**Tested:** Issue 172  
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[www.velodyne.com](http://www.velodyne.com)

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| 8ft | 16:9 (viewable area 92" x 52") | £265 |

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